



Daily Report

Near East & South Asia

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Yemeni-Eritrean Conflict

Eritrean Coverage of Conflict Over Islands *WA2012150095*

For further reportage of the Eritrean-Yemeni confrontation over the Hanish Islands in the Red Sea, including official Eritrean Foreign Ministry statements, please see the East Africa section of the 19 December Sub-Saharan Africa DAILY REPORT and subsequent issues.

OIC Offers To Mediate in Dispute

LD2012100695 Riyadh SPA in Arabic
0855 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Dubayy, 20 Dec (SFA) — The Organization of the Islamic Conference [OIC] offered on 19 December to mediate in the conflict between Yemen and Eritrea over the latter's aggression against Yemeni islands in the Red Sea.

In a statement faxed to REUTER in Dubayy, OIC Secretary General Hamid Algabid said: "The OIC regrets the outbreak of fighting between the two sides over the island of Greater Hanish which the Eritrean forces have invaded."

Yemen Welcomes International Involvement

EA1912163095 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Radio
Network in Arabic 1200 GMT 19 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The undersecretary for political affairs in the Foreign Ministry, brother Ghalib Ali Jamil, has affirmed that the Yemeni Republic has striven and continues to strive to resolve the dispute with Eritrea bilaterally on the basis of good relations, because Yemen regards this dispute to be ephemeral. He stressed that in all its consultations with the Eritrean brothers, both in Asmara and Sanaa, the Yemeni Republic had expressed its full readiness to resolve the conflict bilaterally and on the basis of friendship, provided Eritrea reciprocated accordingly.

In a statement to the YEMENI NEWS AGENCY, SABA, the undersecretary for political affairs in the Foreign Ministry said that the Yemeni Republic had proposed a number of options on resolving the dispute, starting with bilateral dialogue, acceptance of the provisions of the international and maritime laws or finally arbitration through the International Court of Justice. However, he added, the brothers in Eritrea were in a hurry and suddenly they attacked us on the Yemeni island of Hanish al-Khabir, at a time when there was no expectation that a neighboring state such as Eritrea would undertake such an invasion.

Brother Ghalib Ali Jamil made it clear that Lieutenant General Ali Abdullah Salih, president of the Republic,

through contacts with Eritrean President Afewerki, had agreed on a cease-fire, removal of the effects of the aggression, Eritrea's withdrawal from the Yemeni island and a return to normalcy.

In conclusion, the undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry welcomed any Arab, regional, or international move in support of Yemen and its sovereignty, taking into account that peace and stability in the Red Sea region and the Bab al-Mandab straits was the concern not only of Yemen but of the international community, world peace and the security of international shipping in the Red Sea.

Yemen Denies Launching New Attack by Warplanes

NC1912155595 Paris AFP in English
1458 GMT 19 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Sanaa, Dec 19 (AFP)—Yemen said Tuesday [19 December] it supported any diplomatic initiative to settle its conflict with Eritrea, denying its warplanes launched a fresh attack on a Red Sea island captured Monday by Eritrean troops.

"Yemen welcomes any Arab, regional or international initiative which might support its position to guarantee security and stability in the Red Sea," Ghalib 'Ali Jamil, the undersecretary for foreign affairs, told AFP.

"Security in the Red Sea not only concerns Yemen, but the whole international community," he added.

Yemen "is constantly trying to settle peacefully the dispute with Eritrea" over the sovereignty of the Hanish archipelago, north of the Bab al-Mandab straits between the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

UN Secretary General Butrus Butrus-Ghali offered to try to end the dispute peacefully while Qatari officials said Foreign Minister Shaykh Hamad Bin-Jasim Al Thani left for Sanaa to try to mediate an end to the conflict.

Meanwhile, an official spokesman denied that Yemeni warplanes launched a new wave of air attacks on Tuesday against Eritrean forces who captured the island of al-Hanish al-Kabir on Monday.

"No raid took place on Tuesday against Eritrean forces on al-Hanish island," the spokesman said.

Diplomats said Russian-made MiG-29s took off Tuesday from a base outside Sanaa, apparently to attack al-Hanish al-Kabir, diplomats said. Yemeni military officials said Monday that MiGs flying over Sanaa were attacking al-Hanish.

There were also rumors in Yemen that Yemeni warplanes were carrying out operations against other Eritrean targets.

The spokesman said that Sanaa "demanded the departure of the Eritrean forces and the settlement of the dispute through negotiations."

'Military Sources' Deny Air Strikes

*JN1912171795 Paris Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic
1700 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[Report by Faysal Mukarram in Sanaa]

[FBIS Translated Text] Yemeni military sources denied that Yemeni fighter planes have strafed the Eritrean forces, which invaded the Yemeni island of al-Hanish al-Kabir in the Red Sea last Friday. The Yemeni sources reaffirmed that the cease-fire is still holding between the Eritrean forces and the Yemeni garrison on the island in accordance with the agreement reached between Yemeni President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih and Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki on 17 December.

Diplomatic sources in Sanaa noted today that the Yemeni and Eritrean sides would hold talks in the next few days on the level of the interior ministers to settle the conflict and demarcate maritime borders between the two countries in accordance with the international charters.

The Yemeni Government asked the Eritrean Government many times to immediately withdraw its forces from the island and to remove all traces of aggression in preparation for containing what took place through channels of dialogue and peaceful bilateral dialogue.

The Yemeni sources said that the Eritrean forces did not capture the whole island of al-Hanish al-Kabir and that the few members of the Yemeni garrison, with a small amount of weapons, are still stationed there and abiding by the cease-fire.

The sources added that the Yemeni Government does not expect Eritrea to take any irresponsible act regarding the al-Hanish al-Saghir or Jabal Zuqar in the Red Sea. The sources reiterated Yemen's right to restore the al-Hanish al-Kabir at any price, noting that Yemen prefers a peaceful solution between the two countries.

Foreign Ministry Denies Raids

*JN1912173295 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Radio Network
in Arabic 1712 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] An official source at the Foreign Ministry today denied any air raids on the Yemeni island of al-Hanish al-Kabir today. In a statement to the Yemeni News Agency, SABA, the source said that

the reports carried by some news agencies on this issue are baseless and that no military operations were carried out by Yemen since the cease-fire announcement. The source reiterated that the situation in the Yemeni island of al-Hanish al-Kabir is calm.

Yemen Envoy Hints at Israeli Involvement

*NC2012115895 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1126 GMT 20 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] Tunis, 20 Dec (MENA)—Yemeni Ambassador to Tunisia Rashid Muhammad Thabit has said that the timing of the treacherous aggression recently carried out by Eritrean military forces against the Yemeni Hanish al-Kabir Island is suspicious and has serious political implications.

In an interview published today by the Tunisian newspaper AL-SHURUQ, the Yemeni ambassador declared that a foreign power that has always planned to control the Red Sea waterway and all strategic points along the waterway began recently to make movements designed to control the Bab al-Mandab strait in view of its vital strategic importance.

The Yemeni ambassador explained that the treacherous aggression by Eritrean military forces against Hanish al-Kabir was part of the plan mentioned above. He said this aggression has certain political implications with regard to its timing and the type of weapons used in it. He revealed that the Eritrean forces used Israeli-made weapons and equipment, including the boats used in the landing operation on Hanish al-Kabir. He added that the Yemeni Army monitored most of the radio communication between the Eritrean military force that carried out the flagrant assault and the Eritrean Army Command. He said this communication was carried out in Hebrew.

Yemen Cabinet Condemns Attack, Asserts Sovereignty

*JN2012125895 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Radio Network
in Arabic 1200 GMT 20 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] The Council of Ministers held a regular session under Prime Minister 'Abd-al-'Aziz 'Abd-al-Ghani this morning. Having debated and endorsed the decisions it made during its last session, the council discussed the topics listed on its agenda. It reviewed the situation between our country and the State of Eritrea. It expressed amazement and condemnation of the treacherous aggression Eritrea has mounted on the Yemeni island of al-Hanish al-Kabir. The council reiterated our country's adherence to its sovereignty rights to the Yemeni islands. It also stressed the need for Eritrean troops to evacuate the Yemeni island of al-Hanish,

and to release POW's before the two parties can return to the negotiating table to settle the issue pertaining to maritime borders between the two countries.

The council appreciated the regional and international support for our country in its confrontation of the Eritrean aggression.

The council also discussed the outcome of the meetings held by the Higher Yemeni-Saudi Committee. It expressed satisfaction with the outcome of these meetings and made the necessary decisions to implement the results of the committee meetings.

Furthermore, the council approved the executive program of a cooperation agreement signed between our country and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in Sanaa on 11 November 1995. The agreement covers bilateral cooperation in the area of civil service and administrative development for the years 1996-98.

At the end of the session, the council was apprised of the contents of a report submitted by the minister of awqaf and guidance on the results of a visit he made to the fraternal Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in early December at the head of a Yemeni delegation.

Yemen Minister Notes Country's Policy on Islands

JN1912132995 Amman Radio Jordan Network
in Arabic 1200 GMT 19 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Regarding the political contacts to solve the crisis between Yemen and Eritrea, Yemeni Information Minister 'Abd-al-Rahman al-Akwa' spoke to our radio over the telephone from Sanaa. He said:

[Begin al-'Akwa' recording] Dialogue is underway between our country and the brothers and neighbors in Eritrea. The brother president and the Eritrean president held a telephone contact yesterday. The Yemeni policy is clear, which is to solve the issue peacefully — by solving the maritime border problem between Yemen and Eritrea peacefully within the framework of historical right, and adhering to Yemen's sovereignty over the Red Sea islands, especially al-Hanish al-Kabir. [end recording]

Concerning the Eritrean proposal to go to the International Court of Justice to decide the sovereignty of al-Hanish al-Kabir Island, the Yemeni information minister said:

[Begin al-'Akwa' recording] During a visit to Eritrea by the brother foreign minister before the Eritrean aggression against the island, Yemen had proposed adhering to peaceful means, but in case no result is reached, we can seek arbitration, and if we fail, we can go to the International Court of Justice. However,

instead of committing themselves to the resumption of dialogue after the month of Ramadan as we had agreed, we were surprised by the Eritrean blatant aggression against the island. The idea of resorting to the International of Justice was a Yemeni proposal before an Eritrean proposal. The Eritreans only spoke about it after their aggression against the island. [end recording]

Yemen's Parliament Speaker Views Conflict

NC2012084295 Cairo Voice of the Arabs in Arabic
0610 GMT 20 Dec 95

[Telephone interview with Shaykh 'Abdallah al-Ahmar, speaker of the Yemeni House of Representatives, in Riyadh, by Fawzi al-Jundi, in Cairo; date not given—recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Al-Jundi] Shaykh 'Abdallah, We wish to welcome you to the Voice of the Arabs.

[Al-Ahmar] Thank you.

[Al-Jundi] Recent hostilities between Yemen and Eritrea over the al-Hanish al-Kabir Island are the focus of widespread attention. As speaker of the Yemeni House of Representatives, what do you wish to say about the need to contain this conflict?

[Al-Ahmar] It was a totally new development that took us by surprise. In the past, we provided asylum for Eritreans and backed Eritrea. We never had any disputes with it before. The islands in question have always been Yemeni.

[Al-Jundi] Do you think the dispute can be settled peacefully?

[Al-Ahmar] Every problem has a solution. This depends on our Eritrean neighbors' willingness to be understanding and reasonable. There is no need for such a conflict. We had not expected such a reward for our earlier backing for Eritrea. It is an illogical thing.

[Al-Jundi] Yemeni President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih and Eritrean President Isaias Afworki have been in communication with each other. Have their contacts succeeded in formulating a specific position on the issue?

[Al-Ahmar] Contacts have taken place but I don't know what they produced or if an agreement has been reached.

[Al-Jundi] Shaykh al-Ahmar, how large was the Yemeni military presence on these islands before hostilities erupted?

[Al-Ahmar] We only had a small presence there to guard the installations and lighthouses on the islands. It was not enough for military defense or hostilities against another military force.

[Al-Jundi] Will Yemen ask the UN Security Council to settle this dispute?

[Al-Ahmar] First of all, we will do everything we can to settle the dispute bilaterally and later perhaps with the help of regional partners. If these efforts fail, we will in the end be forced to take the matter to the Security Council.

[Al-Jundi] What is Yemen doing on the Arab scene to contain the conflict with Eritrea?

[Al-Ahmar] His excellency the president, Lieutenant General 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih, must have already contacted other rulers in the region, our brothers and friends, to contain the dispute.

[Al-Jundi] You are now visiting Riyadh. Have you made any contacts or held any meeting with Saudi officials to get their help in settling the problem?

[Al-Ahmar] We came to Riyadh for a meeting of the Saudi-Yemeni higher joint committee. There are also meetings by the committees formed in accordance with the memorandum of understanding between the two countries. We did not discuss the Eritrean aggression.

[Al-Jundi] Shaykh al-Ahmar, the meeting of the Saudi-Yemeni higher joint committee has ended. What is your assessment of the meeting?

[Al-Ahmar] We had very good results. We made some large steps and drew up agendas for other committees.

[Al-Jundi] In recent statements, you noted that the recent tribal incidents on the border will not affect the Yemeni-Saudi relationship. Could you please shed more light on this point?

[Al-Ahmar] Friction between tribes in the desert will not affect the course that we and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are pursuing.

[Al-Jundi] Have you agreed on any specifics with regard to border demarcation with Saudi Arabia?

[Al-Ahmar] This issue has two stages. The first stage, included in the Al-Ta'if Treaty, was implemented long ago and there is no disagreement about it. What we need to do now is to restore border markings which have become eroded with time and to specify the areas where border patrols will operate. Anything left out by the Al-Ta'if Treaty is under discussion by a concerned committee. It will continue its work until the entire border is delineated.

[Al-Jundi] One last question. Could you tell us in a few specific words how Yemen believes the conflict with Eritrea can be settled?

[Al-Ahmar] Both sides must resort to reason, exercise self-restraint, and accept the facts. These islands are Yemeni. I am sure there is a party which wishes to involve Yemen in such a dispute.

[Al-Jundi] Thank you, Shaykh al-Ahmar.

[Al-Ahmar] Thank you very much.

Yemen's Salih Meets Qatari Minister on Conflict
JN1912174895 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1700 GMT 19 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Brother Lieutenant General President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih today received brother Shaykh Hamad Bin-Jasim Bin-Jabr Al Thani, foreign minister of fraternal Qatar, who conveyed to the brother president a message from his brother His Highness Shaykh Hamad Bin-Khalifah Al Thani, amir of Qatar.

The message deals with the strong fraternal relations between both sisterly countries as well as regional, Arab, and international issues and developments. It also requests getting acquainted with the latest developments of the Eritrean aggression on the Yemeni island of al-Hanish al-Kabir.

During the meeting, they discussed aspects of fraternal relations and ways to enhance and promote them in the interest of both sisterly peoples.

The brother president asked the Qatari foreign minister to convey a reply message to his brother His Highness Shaykh Hamad Bin-Khalifah Al Thani reassuring him about the situation. President Salih stressed our country's interest in resolving the dispute with Eritrea over the maritime borders through dialogue and peaceful means in accordance with the international charters and laws.

The brother president also expressed his thanks and appreciation for the fraternal position of Qatar's amir, government, and people in standing alongside our people and championing their just causes and legitimate rights. He wished the Qatari people further progress and prosperity.

The meeting was attended by brother Dr. 'Abd-al-Karim al-Iryani, deputy prime minister and foreign minister, and Muhammad Nasir al-Fadalah, Qatari charge d'affaires to our country.

The brother foreign minister of Qatar arrived in Sanaa this afternoon as an envoy from His Highness Shaykh Hamad Bin-Khalifah Al Thani, amir of fraternal Qatar, to acquaint himself with the latest developments in the Red Sea region [in the wake of] the treacherous Eritrean aggression on the Yemeni island of al-Hanish al-Kabir.

Inter-Arab Affairs

Arab League Chief Berates Eritrea Over Invasion

NC1912160995 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1330 GMT 19 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 19 Dec (MENA)—Arab League Secretary General Dr. 'Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid has urged the Eritrean Government to resolve its existing dispute with Yemen through peaceful means and to respect the relations of good neighborliness between them.

In statements today, Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid described Eritrea's stance as dangerous and a threat to the security and stability of the Red Sea. He pointed out that the Arab League general secretariat is closely following the issue because Yemen is an Arab country and an Arab League member which has been subjected to blatant aggression and a military incursion despite the existence of an agreement between the two countries to resolve this dispute through diplomatic means and on the basis of their good relations.

Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid stressed that the general secretariat's statement yesterday was addressed to the Eritrean Government, urging it to resolve the dispute by peaceful means. Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid wondered if Eritrea was really expecting the Arab League to remain silent over its aggression against an Arab state.

The Arab League secretary general affirmed that the general secretariat has been closely following the situation since the outbreak of the dispute between the two countries. He said that the general secretariat issued a statement on 6 December in which it reiterated Yemen's right to and sovereignty over the two islands of al-Hanish al-Kabir and al-Hanish al-Saghir as Yemeni territory. Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid said that the Arab League's stance consists of recognizing the need for resolving the dispute between Yemen and Eritrea over the maritime borders by peaceful means.

The Arab League secretary general said that Eritrea's position contradicts the agreement between the two countries to discuss the dispute after the month of Ramadan [21 January to approximately 20 February 1996]. He noted that the island of Hanish belongs to the Arabs and is closer to the Yemeni coast as determined by the navigation line passing through the Bab el-Mandeb.

Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid stated that until the last moment the Yemeni Government was eager to resolve the dispute through peaceful means. Yemen sent a delegation comprised of Foreign Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Iryani and Interior Minister Husayn 'Awad to Asmara last week, where they reached agreement with the Eritrean side to

the effect that the two sides would meet again after Ramadan.

The Arab League secretary general said that the Yemeni government's position has been clear since the start of the crisis, when it accepted the principle of arbitration by the International Court of Justice. This shows that Yemen definitely favors a dialogue. He said that the world was taken aback by the Eritrean attack on and occupation of the island on Friday [15 December] evening. Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid said that Eritrea did not respect the agreement or international arbitration.

In conclusion, Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid emphasized the Arab League's desire to resolve the Yemeni-Eritrean dispute through negotiations and dialogue, as this would restore their strong relations.

Maghreb Ministers Begin Meetings in Tripoli

LD1912173695 Tripoli Voice of Greater Arab
Homeland in Arabic 1130 GMT 19 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Proceedings of the Arab Maghreb Union's [AMU] interior ministers' 4th session started this morning in Tripoli.

The brother secretary of the General People's Committee for Justice and Public Security [Muhammad Mahmud al-Hijazi]; Mustapha Benmansour, the interior, local authorities, environment and administrative reform minister in Algeria; Tunisian Interior Minister Mohamed Jegham; Abdelkhalek Bendjeloun, commissioner at the Ministry of State for the Interior and Information, and the Mauritanian ambassador to the Great Jamahiriyyah, are taking part in these meetings. [passage omitted]

The AMU interior ministers will discuss a number of issues on the agenda which aim at strengthening the ties of security cooperation, the freedom of movement and residence for the citizens, the unified identity card, combating natural disasters and epidemics, and cooperation between the concerned services.

Islamic Affairs

Political Islam Review: 'AQIDATI 12 Dec

NC1812135495

[FBIS Editorial Report] The following is a comprehensive review of all items in the 12 December edition of the Arabic language newspaper 'AQIDATI that pertain to political Islamic issues.

CONTENTS:

1. President Mubarak Interviewed on Violence, Islam

2. Al-Azhar Official Cited on Muslim-Christian Meeting in Europe
3. Dialogue With Non-Muslims, Freedom of Thought Viewed
4. Seminar on Islamic Arts Seen as Rebuttal of Extremism Charges
5. Russian Islamic Official Interviewed
6. Columnist Wants Serb Leaders Tried as War Criminals
7. Picture of Prophet Muhammad's 'Real' Tomb Published

PRESIDENT MUBARAK INTERVIEWED ON VIOLENCE, ISLAM

On pages 3, 5, and 7 'AQIDATI publishes the 1,200-word "text" of an interview with Egyptian President Husni Mubarak by Samir Rajab and al-Sayyid 'Abd-al-Ra'uf. The place and date of the interview are not given. Mubarak discusses violence, Islam, U.S. Congress decision to transfer U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, the Middle East peace process, and other issues.

— A 300-word editorial on page 7 says President Mubarak's interview with 'AQIDATI emphasizes that religion runs deep in the veins of all Egyptians, that the political leadership realizes this fact and acts accordingly, that religious education through establishments like al-Azhar is the Egyptians' way to confront challenges as we enter the 21st century, and that "printed media, of which 'AQIDATI represents a vital part, play an extremely important role in consolidating true religious values and fighting terrorism, extremism, and deviation."

AL-AZHAR OFFICIAL CITED ON MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN MEETING IN EUROPE

On page 10 is featured a 1,700-word interview with Dr. Najah Mahmud al-Ghunaymi, a professor at al-Azhar University who represented Egypt and al-Azhar at a conference in Switzerland promoting a dialogue between Muslims and Christians. He discusses the purpose and importance of the conference and the studies presented there. He says a Swiss academy organized the conference because it believes that good Islamic-Christian relations will minimize differences and prevent a bloody confrontation between them. And with the increasing number of Muslims in Europe, he says, the academy thought it is necessary to find ways for peaceful coexistence between all followers of divine religions.

Noting that the conference was held on the 900th anniversary of the Crusades, which he notes began when Pope Urban II declared war on the Muslims, Dr. al-

Ghunaymi says: "Although nine centuries have passed since then, no pope has yet issued a decree canceling the declaration of war against the Muslims, nor has an apology been made to the Muslims over the tragedies experienced by the Islamic east during the Crusades."

Dr. al-Ghunaymi says all the studies presented to the conference stress that current generations must not suffer because of past mistakes and that new formulas must urgently be found for coexistence between Muslims and Christians. He stresses that Islam urges a peaceful and respectful dialogue with all religions and believes that everyone is fully entitled to his own faith. This tolerance, he says, has attracted many non-Muslims to Islam over the years, "and this is contrary to what happened to Muslims in Andalusia and what is happening to them in Bosnia-Herzegovina today."

DIALOGUE WITH NON-MUSLIMS, FREEDOM OF THOUGHT VIEWED

In an 1,800-word interview conducted by Basyuni al-Halawani and Jamal Salim on page 4, Dr. Mahmud Hamdi Zaquq, vice president of al-Azhar University for women students' affairs, discusses a dialogue with non-Muslims, enlightenment, freedom of thought, and the conduct of al-Azhar coeds. He expresses his belief that dialogue conferences with non-Muslims are useful and positive, especially as they enable Muslim ulema to clarify the Islamic viewpoint, "which is often distorted." He says he finds scholars in the West ready to listen and to discuss ideas frankly and objectively.

Asked about Muslim writers who "encroach upon Islam" on the pretext of freedom of thought and expression, Dr. Zaquq stresses that Islam guarantees freedom of thought and scientific research. But those who believe in things that go against the general creed of the society, he says, must not try to spread their beliefs and "poisonous ideas" in society with the purpose of creating confusion. If they keep their ideas to themselves, no one can harm them. He says: "Every nation has its sanctities in which it takes pride. These sanctities must be safeguarded, protected, and respected." He says there is room for personal interpretation of Islamic precepts by all Muslims, but constant and firm principles must not be touched. He says Islam advocates enlightenment and learning from others, but enlightenment must not contravene religion, because "religion is for the good of the society, it is for life." He defends the women students of al-Azhar university as a model of decency and scientific achievement, and says the conduct of some girls, like their failure to wear Islamic garb, represents individual cases only.

SEMINAR ON ISLAMIC ARTS SEEN AS REBUTTAL OF EXTREMISM CHARGES

Iman 'Abd-al-Muhsin's 800-word report on page 14 concerns an international seminar on Islamic architecture organized by the Egyptian Ministry of Culture in Cairo on 3-9 December. The seminar, which reportedly attracted experts from 30 states, noted creative Islamic handicraft skills and called for measures to protect outstanding Islamic architectural examples. In his speech to the opening session, the Culture Ministry's under secretary noted the importance of the seminar because "it comes while Islam is facing vicious onslaughts seeking to harm it and blame it for the cycles of violence and extremism in the world. It stresses that Islam is rich in art and beauty in all aspects of life."

— In a related 500-word article on page 10, columnist Majdi Salim praises the seminar as a reply to those who claim that Islam opposes creativity and beauty and accuse it of backwardness and stagnation.

RUSSIAN ISLAMIC OFFICIAL INTERVIEWED

On page 20 'AQUDATI publishes a 1,200-word Muhammad al-'Abnudi interview with Shaykh Rawi 'Ayn-al-Din, chairman of the "Religious Directorate of Russia's Muslims." The date and place of the interview are not given. The Russian religious official defends Islam against accusations of violence and says extremism exists in all religions. He says the Islamic world is facing a "serious challenge" from some reactionary forces in Europe. These forces, he explains, are using the media to frighten Westerners by what they call "the green menace" [reference to Islam] after the end of the "red menace." They are turning the Islamic world into a scapegoat and blaming it for world instability, he says. He terms this as a "disturbing trend."

Asked if there is equality among religions in Russia, Shaykh 'Ayn-al-Din says the Russian Constitution acknowledges such equality, "but the citizens do not respect this principle." He cites polls in Russia as showing that 40 percent of the people do not recognize freedom of religion. He calls for more tolerance and cooperation among the followers of all religions in Russia, and notes the "urgent" need to work out a theory for peaceful coexistence among religions, one that respects basic human rights and establishes legal equality among religions. Finally, he maintains that Islam is a source of ethical and spiritual values worldwide, and, as many now believe, "an important pillar against the nihilism and lack of spiritualism from which the contemporary society is now suffering."

COLUMNIST WANTS SERB LEADERS TRIED AS WAR CRIMINALS

In a 300-word article on page 20, 'Adil Dayf says the United Nations and the United States have a responsibility to bring to trial Bosnia Serb leader Karadzic and the commander of the Bosnian Serb forces Mladic as war criminals. He contends that these two "slaughtered hundreds of thousands and displaced millions of Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina." He says there will be no real peace in that country if these two remain free. He says the world community must punish the Bosnian Serbs as it did Iraq. He notes that Iraq was punished "even though it withdrew from Kuwait and, as attested to by UN envoy Rolf Ekeus, implemented the international resolutions."

PICTURE OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S 'REAL' TOMB PUBLISHED

The central pages, 12-13, are devoted to a 2,000-word report by Salah 'Abd-al-Mu'ti, Muna 'Abd-al-Na'im, and Rabab Ibrahim on the "fake" picture of the Prophet Muhammad's tomb, which the newspaper said in its previous issue was distributed in an unnamed mosque in Egypt to confuse Muslims. A picture of "the real chamber of the tomb from outside" is published next to the "fake" one. The reporters cite answers by some religious figures, sociologists, and ordinary citizens on the purpose of distributing the fake picture. They urge punishment for those who printed the picture and they see it as part of the campaign against Islam by its enemies.

Political Islam Review: AL-SHA'B 12 Dec
NC2012062895

[FBIS Editorial Report] The following is a comprehensive review of all items in the 12 December edition of the Arabic language newspaper AL-SHA'B that pertain to political Islamic issues.

CONTENTS:

1. Reports, Articles View Elections, Rigging
2. Writer Slams U.S. Bid To Deport Mujahidin From Bosnia
3. U.S. Role, Islamic Absence in Bosnian Pact Noted
4. Writer Points Out Main National Issues

REPORTS, ARTICLES VIEW ELECTIONS, RIGGING

Like the previous issue, this issue of AL-SHA'B is almost completely devoted to charges of rigging in the People's Assembly elections and their runoff. In a 350-word report on page 1 headlined "Washington Warns

of the Danger of Election Rigging for the Security Situation in Egypt and the Region," Mahmud Bakri cites a White House report that the Egyptian Government's "violent interference" in the elections eliminated any real opportunity to gauge Egyptian public opinion and learn the real support for the various political forces. Bakri also notes the danger the rigging poses for the security situation in Egypt and neighboring countries. He notes that suppressing the political forces and denying them an opportunity to express their views will prompt them to support any operations against government supporters. Bakri says that the results of the elections have poisoned the atmosphere of political and democratic freedom as well as the remaining measure of trust between the political parties and the ruling National Democratic Party [NDP]. He also claims that the U.S. State Department voiced concern because the political parties concur that the elections were not impartial or honest and because the opposition has little representation. U.S. and European circles noted that the government supporters had had "a calculated, strong determination to defeat the candidates of the Islamic current."

In a related 300-report on pages 1 and 8, Salah Budaywi says that U.S. envoy Dennis Ross broached the issue of election-rigging with President Husni Mubarak. Budaywi notes that the U.S. Administration is concerned over Egyptian opposition claims of serious violations and excesses, a matter which may shake security and stability and help spawn violence.

In a 600-word editorial headlined "Violence and Copts in the Election Campaign" published on pages 1 and 8, Labor Party Leader Ibrahim Shukri discusses reports by the government-controlled papers of acts of violence during the election campaign against Coptic candidates running in the elections. He refutes claims that the Labor Party and the Muslim Brotherhood [MB] took part in the violence in certain constituencies. He asserts that the Labor Party and the MB had no candidates in the constituencies where people were killed. He confirms that no Labor Party or MB candidates were accused of killings during the whole election campaign. On the contrary, he stresses, the Labor Party and MB candidates were the victims of rigging and attacks by the police and thugs. He notes that the ruling NDP did not nominate any Copts either during the elections or the runoff, adding: "I accuse the NDP of deliberately harming national unity."

In a 2,000-word article covering the whole of page 2 and headlined: "They Will Not Get Away With The Crime of Frustrating the Nation's Will," chief editor Majdi Husayn says that the rulers are betting that the "election rigging scandal is a storm that will blow over

sooner or later" and that things will settle down by virtue of the "strength of the status quo." He argues that this is "unrealistic" because the "catastrophe is too big to pass unnoticed" and because it entails a severe constitutional crisis. He says that according to the Constitution the regime is based on a majority party. Noting that all 13 opposition parties won only 2.8 percent of the People's Assembly seats among them, Husayn argues that if the elections were free, as the rulers maintain, the disaster is even greater, for such a result means the "failure and collapse of the constitutional system." He says that the claim that the opposition represents only 2 percent of the people means that the political system has "utterly failed" and that the "despotic government has strangled the opposition."

Husayn contends that a ruler under whose administration the opposition wins only 2.8 percent of the votes shows his failure because "his performance led to this." He says: "We hold President Mubarak and his government responsible" for the opposition's winning only 2.8 percent of the seats. He argues that if we take the election results seriously, they mean the "failure and collapse of the political regime." This situation highlights the need to find the reasons for the "demise" of the opposition, amend the Constitution, and to give the opposition an equal opportunity to engage in political activity among the masses. He says that Mubarak's remark that he wishes "that the opposition had won more seats" means that he admits responsibility for the results. Accepting the results of the elections means that the Egyptian people are "mentally retarded," because there is no electorate at the end of the 20th century that gives 97.5 percent of its votes to one party. Husayn asserts that the fact is that the elections were "completely rigged" and the results have nothing to do with reality.

In conclusion, Husayn says that despite the frustration resulting from the campaign of "treachery and treason, popular wrath reigns supreme." He urges the opposition to learn a lesson and stresses the need for the opposition groups to unite their ranks and declare a national front. He says that "alliance" against the "despotic and corrupt" government is a paramount patriotic cause and that all differences must be postponed until the opposition can "eliminate the main danger" to the nation. He says that if the Islamic and national opposition forces realize this and emerge cohesive, they could be stronger and more prepared for a showdown.

A 1,700-word account on page 3 by Subhi Buhayri notes that the political parties and forces held an international news conference at the Nasirite Arab Democratic Party headquarters on 9 December. He says that hundreds of Arab and foreign correspondents attended. After the five-hour conference, the correspondents confirmed that

the government's claim of integrity and neutrality in the election campaign was meant to cover up reality. Opposition party leaders are quoted as saying that the elections were completely rigged and that they will act to save future generations who are threatened with a total absence of democracy. They called for free elections under a "free and neutral government" and judicial and international supervision. Labor Party leader Ibrahim Shukri said that in Shirbin constituency where he ran as a candidate not more than 10 percent of the people managed to cast their ballots. He said that this meeting will "usher in the beginning of a plan of action" in which all parties and political forces will participate.

Speaking at the conference, MB Deputy General Guide Ma'mun al-Hudaybi said the "disaster is great" and the situation requires massive efforts. He said that the situation is ominous and our sons and future generations will inherit the current economic, political, and social problems. He noted that prior to the "farce" of the election, the government canceled the elections in the professional associations and universities and the MB leaders were tried by military courts.

On the same page, AL-SHA'B carries a 500-word statement released and signed by the leaders of the opposition parties denouncing the election rigging.

There is a 1,300-word unattributed account on the same page on a NADP report on the elections. It notes that several months before the elections, the leaders of the political parties sent a petition to President Mubarak outlining fair demands for neutral and honest elections, but there was no response to any of the demands. The report says that all the government departments and media devoted their resources and facilities to serving government party candidates. Moreover, President Mubarak's successive statements confirmed that the state and its various departments were "biased toward the government candidates." The government candidates were allowed to hold conferences, rallies, and stage marches before officially getting the race, while opposition candidates were denied this. It charges that there was flagrant and clear tampering with the list of voters to favor government candidates.

In a 1,000-word article on the same page entitled "A Unified Security Plan To Defeat the Islamic Alliance Candidates," Qutb al-'Arabi says that the results of the elections were no surprise to the Islamic current. Noting that the opposition won only 3 percent of the votes, he says that the "deliberate liquidation of the Islamic Alliance candidates was not haphazard," but a result of a calculated plan by the political leadership carried out by the police and aided by all media organs. He claims

that it was obvious from monitoring the rigging process that there was "a standard plan" to defeat the Islamic Alliance candidates in the runoff directed by the State Intelligence Service and plain clothes policemen. This process was repeated in all the constituencies where Islamic candidates ran.

The government, al-'Arabi claims, planned to completely destroy the Islamic current because it is a formidable political rival. It paved the way for the liquidation of the Islamic current with "repression in the professional associations and universities and with the military trials of the Muslim Brothers." He says that the goal of the Islamic current was to break the political and information isolation that the government wanted to impose and to strengthen its attachment to the masses. The elections showed that the government "clings to the one party system" and thus is regressing from democracy. In conclusion, al-'Arabi says that many people and politicians have now "lost confidence in the possibility of a peaceful democratic change with ballots."

In a 3,500-word article on page 5 headlined "Interior Ministry Mistakes That Threaten the Legality of the New People's Assembly," Labor Party Deputy Leader Dr. Muhammad Hilmi Murad views the election results and its shortcomings. He says it is worthy of attention that all deputies in the former People's Assembly who used to question bills and laws were defeated in the elections. After listing their names and arguments over the press law and other challenges in the previous People's Assembly, he asks if their failure was a coincidence. Noting that several cabinet ministers and officials ran in the elections while continuing to hold their posts, he says that this was in violation of the Constitution. He also notes that even though the government said that the judiciary would head the major committees as well as the subcommittees supervising the elections, there were no judicial representatives on the subcommittees, and this opened the door wide for tampering and rigging.

In a 1,200-word article on the same page headlined "The Election Campaign, Our Assessment and Feelings," MB Deputy General Guide Mustafa Mashhur says that the election campaign involved various weapons and goals. It entailed many negative aspects, but only a few positive ones, and it failed to "achieve what was required." The results were "known in advance" and all arrangements were made to achieve them. The way was paved by the detention and trial by military courts of many MB figures.

Mashhur argues that the boycott of the previous elections helped the regime to get a tame People's Assembly free of opposition, thus enabling it to pass several ill-

famed laws. Seeking a similar People's Assembly, the NDP and the various security agencies drew up a careful plan and flagrantly interfered in all stages of the election process. "The official violence focused on the Islamic candidates," he says. He claims that the election results have "shaken the image of the regime" and the claim of democracy is "no longer acceptable or credible." The Egyptian people are "tense and angry," he says, adding: "We do not want this situation to continue." Mashhur says they must quickly find a way to calm the anger, because "violence breeds violence." He says the government plan focused on preventing the MB and the Labor Party candidates from winning by restricting their movement or detaining them. He argues that despite all these restrictions, the peoples' response to the Islamic Alliance and the motto "Islam is the solution" was great. Noting that only one Islamic Alliance candidate won, he says that this is "an indication of the government's fear of the Islamic candidates." Mashhur says the Islamic candidates' defeat by force is "not a loss but a sign of strength." Concluding, Mashhur says that if the ruling regime has succeeded in forming a People's Assembly free of serious opposition in the belief that this would achieve stability and peace, the fact is the regime is forcing the opposition into the streets and to chaos. The laws that muzzle the people and increase repression "do not auger well," because the "people's patience has limits." Instability may exacerbate, thus necessitating more repressive laws that destroy the image of democratic rule, particularly after the carnage of the elections.

Discussing the violence against the Islamic current, primarily the MB—although the latter did nothing against the regime in the recent years—he asks if the "target is Islam and curtailing the free spirit it inspires in its followers." The government wants a peaceful and subservient Islam, but this is "unacceptable and will not happen." He says perhaps the aim is to eliminate the MB in preparation for broader normalization of ties with the Zionist enemy after an agreement is reached between it and Syria and Lebanon.

The whole of pages 6 and 7 and most of page 9 are devoted to reports of rigging from various governorates. Among others, the paper carries the following headlines: "In al-Minufiyah: Human Rights Representatives and the Supervisory Committee Witness the Election Scandal." "Those Who Dance on Our Wounds." In al-Zawiyah al-Hamra' "The State Security Intelligence Stirs Up Sectarian Seditious and Embroil the Judges and Candidates in Quarrels." In al-Sharqiyah "Flagrant Security Interference and a Fierce Battle in Mashtul." In Minya al-Qamh, "The Labor Party Candidate Prefers Losing to Joining the NDP."

In a 600-word article on the back page entitled "The Elections in Our Country and Other Countries," Islamic Writer Muhammad 'Abd-al-Quddus says that one of the basic demands of the national forces in Egypt is to limit the presidential term of office so that it does not exceed two terms; this would prevent a ruler's despotism. He says the painful circumstances in Egypt are a testimony to this sound demand. He claims that President Mubarak's third term is his worst of all, noting that it began with the arrest of prominent opponents such as Hilmi Murad and 'Adil Husayn, and ended with the "ugliest elections ever." He says the new People's Assembly is a "legitimate offspring of the emergency law." This assembly is like that which al-Sadat formed late in his rule. While the world forges ahead on the path of progress, Egypt remains backward and ruled by one party, he says. Comparing the elections in Algeria and those Egypt, he says the Algerian president won by 61 percent of the votes, not by 97 percent as in Egypt. He says the world respects Poland for its recent free elections, while it "looks down" on the elections in our country.

In a related article on the same page entitled "The Opposition Is at a Crossroads; To Be Or Not To Be," Al-Sayyid al-Ghadban says the elections are over and the government has achieved what it "wanted and planned." It profited enormously from the participation of the opposition forces, gaining a golden opportunity to hold elections with an "appearance of democracy." It also made huge gains in defeating the opposition symbols and winning 97 percent of the votes. Talk of rigging will subside in time and the government will claim that it represents the vast majority. The opposition was "trapped by the government deception" and promises of free elections. He demands that the opposition parties and forces reconsider coordination, "define a single goal" and marshal all their forces to achieve it by all legitimate means. He says he wants this "cruel experiment of the election farce" to serve as a turning point in cooperation among all the opposition forces. He says the new People's Assembly must pass numerous laws to totally smash the role of the trade unions and to restrict the remaining bit of freedom. Concluding, al-Ghadban urges all opposition forces and parties "to unify their forces and form a bastion" to defend freedom before it is too late.

WRITER SLAMS U.S. BID TO DEPORT MUJAHIDIN FROM BOSNIA

Muhammad Jamal 'Arafah's 500-word boxed article headlined "The Arab Mujahidin Regiment" appears on page 9. He says it seems that the Arab mujahidin group that played an important role in supporting

the Bosnian forces in repulsing Serb aggression will be the first victim of the peace agreement. These "heroes," who came from all over the world "joined together by Islam" have suddenly become "terrorists" or "extremists" according to U.S. and European officials. They link aid to Bosnia and achieving peace to the expulsion of these mujahidin. The U.S. secretary of defense and a State Department spokesman went so far as to say that these mujahidin "pose a danger to the U.S. forces in Bosnia" and that the U.S. forces may have to drive them out by force. The Arab countries, in the meantime, have begun jailing them on return, he claims. The U.S. demand that these mujahidin, estimated to number 2,000, angered senior commanders of the Bosnian army who defended them, saying they are part of the Bosnian army and not terrorists. 'Arafah says it is strange that the Americans made no mention of the other mercenaries who came from several European countries to help the Serbs against the Bosnians, "as if Muslims alone are terrorists." He says that there is no doubt that for some time there has been an attempt to end Islamic activities in Bosnia and to extinguish the Islamic fire and awakening in Europe.

U.S. ROLE, ISLAMIC ABSENCE IN BOSNIAN PACT NOTED

In a 300-word article on page 9 entitled "Leadership to the United States, Implementation to Europe; and the Muslims To Pay the Bill," Tal'at Rumayh notes that the Islamic countries were not invited to the Dayton Conference or the Budapest conference on the Bosnian crisis. However, they were invited to the London Conference for reasons that the British officials did not conceal. They said that the Islamic countries were invited so as to donate funds for the reconstruction of Bosnia. This is how the Westerners define the framework of Islamic participation in reconstructing what the Serbs have destroyed. The United States arranged the Dayton Agreement, the Europeans took their share, and the agreement was signed in Paris. The peace-keeping forces will be led by an American general and assisted by British and European commanders. Thus, Rumayh says, the United States has gained the lion's share politically and militarily by solving the Bosnian problem while the Islamic countries have "no role but to attend ceremonies and foot the bills."

WRITER POINTS OUT MAIN NATIONAL ISSUES

In a 2,200-word article on the back page headlined "Remember Palestine, Jerusalem, and the POW's," Dr. Mahjub 'Umar says the election circus is over. Claiming that the elections monopolized the attention of political circles and people, he says that they ignored the

main issues and forgot to mark the anniversaries of the Palestinian intifadah or the partition of Palestine. Discussing the recent abduction of two Israeli soldiers in the West Bank, 'Umar says that a Palestinian military court quickly sentenced two Palestinians to jail. He notes that the Israelis continue to beef up their settlements around Jerusalem while Israeli Prime Minister Peres asserts that Jerusalem will not be partitioned or the capital of two states.

'Umar notes Peres' intransigent stance, his call for the Palestinians to change their charter, and his threats to stop redeploying forces. He says Peres could behave as he pleased because Egypt was busy with the elections, Libya and Iraq are besieged, and Syria is waiting for a U.S. envoy. He says the elections diverted the attention of the Egyptian officials and media from the military defense pact between Russia and Israel. In addition to this defense pact, Israeli circles began talking about concluding a defense treaty with the United States. Peres said that a defense pact with the United States would entail deployment of U.S. forces in Israel. Mahjub 'Umar says such a pact will turn "Israel into a U.S. military base superior to all its neighbors." He argues that if such a defense pact is signed the Arabs must reconsider all official and public plans and strategies. He says that now that the elections are over, the issue of the Egyptian POW's killed by the Israelis during the previous wars must come to the fore and the new People's Assembly must highlight and address this issue as a massacre that deserves investigation, compensation, and punishment.

Palestinian Affairs

Palestinian Authority, Hamas Resume Talks in Cairo

'Arafat Adviser Comments

NC1912170995 Cairo MENA in English
1617 GMT 19 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, 19 Dec (MENA) — A delegation of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) under Salim al-Za'nun, and a delegation of Hamas Movement [Islamic Resistance Movement] led by Khalid Mish'al, wound up their third session of talks here this afternoon amidst positive statements by both sides.

Nabil 'Amr, adviser to Palestinian leader Yasir 'Arafat, and PNA spokesman said dialogue, which started yesterday is running in a positive way and there is a high possibility for agreeing over many issues tabled on the agenda.

Today's session focused on elections he said, adding that he felt understanding by Hamas members of the historical importance of the next Palestinian elections, and the PNA wish that Hamas brethren participate in setting up a Palestinian democratic and political system on bases of these elections.

A seven-point agenda for negotiations has been drawn up, 'Amr said adding that the door is open for other points.

The agenda involves several questions such as Palestinian national unity, political pluralism, elections, relations between the PNA and Hamas movement and others topics, he added.

The Palestinian spokesman voiced hope that the two sides would reach an agreement prior to the end of this round that will give a push to the Palestinian political life.

Hamas movement proposed an integrated point of view vis-a-vis elections and their stance towards political solutions, he said making it clear that no definite stance was adopted with regard to Hamas participation in elections.

Hamas Movement was invited to participate in authority, the Palestinian spokesman said making it clear that the movement has a view which should be discussed as they will participate in several fields in the Palestinian political life such as municipal and rural elections.

In reply to a question on the movement's stance towards the armed struggle against Israel, the spokesman said this issue will be examined within the context of the PLO commitments. The two sides are keen on solving differences between them by peaceful means away from violence, member of the movement Muhammad Nazzal said.

The two sides will resume their talks later tonight.

Abu-Middayn Comments

JN1912155795 *Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic*
1221 GMT 19 Dec 95

[Telephone interview with Furayh Abu-Middayn, justice minister and member of the delegation to the dialogue with Hamas, in Cairo, by unidentified correspondent in Jericho; from the "Today's Events" program — live]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Correspondent] Good evening, Mr. Furayh.

[Abu-Middayn] Good evening, you are welcome.

[Correspondent] What did you discuss today?

[Abu-Middayn] In fact, only the issue of elections was discussed today. Brother Abu-al-Adib [Salim al-

Za'nun], brother Nabil 'Amr, and other brothers in the Palestinian delegation held long discussions on the importance of elections and the need to participate in them. This is so because, as you know, there used to be absolute rejection [by Hamas, Islamic Resistance Movement] of elections because they are a manifestation of sovereignty and control of land at present and in the future.

We explained to the brothers in Hamas that their participation in elections is important because we integrate each other, and we are all in the same boat, so no one is permitted to sink this boat or enter the labyrinths of the unipolar international equation which is currently being imposed.

In fact, the brothers in Hamas showed much understanding, however, they said — not in a very clear way — that they will not participate in elections because the Oslo agreement does not give them free choice to participate in them; although yesterday they registered with the Interior Ministry a political party in the Gaza Strip — the [Islamic] National Salvation Party.

I believe that through certain symbols who are known for their long association with Hamas, they will participate in elections under the aegis of this political party. I also believe that this formula is designed to remove the impasse of whether or not to take part in elections. This is so because anyone who does not participate in elections cannot join future Palestinian action.

[Correspondent] Some 16 points are scheduled for discussion during your meetings with the Hamas delegation ...

[Abu-Middayn, interrupting] Are they 16 points?

[Correspondent] As far as we know, yes they are.

[Abu-Middayn] There are only eight points.

[Correspondent] Eight points. So, they have not yet been doubled.

[Abu-Middayn] Yesterday, we talked about Palestinian national unity. It was important for us to discuss this unity openly and clearly. Regarding the first point — namely, national unity and political pluralism — much dialogue was held with them. I believe that discussions on the second point — namely, elections — will be completed today.

There is also a point on the future relationship between the Palestinian Authority [PA] and Hamas. We may later discuss the final phase issues. There are other issues, including, of course, the issue of detainees and prisoners as well as the commitments of the PLO and the PA.

Discussions on some issues can be postponed to future meetings. However, there are today the issues of national unity, elections, and the PA-Hamas relationship. These issues should be settled in this round of talks.

[Correspondent] Mr. Furayh Abu-Middayn in Cairo, thank you very much.

[Abu-Middayn] Thank you. You are welcome.

Al-Za'nun Comments

MM1912152495 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic
19 Dec 95 pp 1, 6

[Unattributed report: "Hamas-Palestinian Authority Dialogue Begins; Fatah Offers Coalition in Elections"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Cairo, AL-HAYAH — The meetings of dialogue between the Palestinian Authority and the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) began in Cairo yesterday.

The Authority delegation is headed by Salim al-Za'nun, acting speaker of the Palestine National Council, while the Hamas delegation is headed by Khalid Mish'al, the movement's official in Jordan. President Yasir 'Arafat is expected to arrive in Cairo tomorrow to participate in part of the dialogue, which focuses, according to a Palestinian source, on Hamas' participation in the Palestinian elections and the announcement of its pledge to suspend its operations in the self-rule areas.

The two delegations held two sessions yesterday. Al-Za'nun told AL-HAYAH that "drawing up a permanent strategy for not resorting to any weapon in the future, for continuing the dialogue, and for utilizing differences in the interests of the Palestinian cause will be an important item on the agenda," while the head of the Hamas delegation pledged to work to make the dialogue a success.

Al-Za'nun said: "We are approaching the final phase (of the negotiations), which will address difficult issues such as the refugees, borders, settlements, and Jerusalem issues, which are not the object of any disagreement even with regard to Hamas officials...and if Hamas wishes to participate in the elections, Fatah will propose a national coalition. Fatah is not seeking to have all the seats in the self-rule council." [passage omitted]

Hamas' Nazzal Comments

NC1912122595 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1144 GMT 19 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 19 Dec (MENA) — The Palestinian Authority [PA] delegation led by Salim al-Za'nun and the Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement]

delegation led by Khalid Mish'al continued their talks in Cairo today for the second consecutive day.

The talks are dealing with the present and future relations between Hamas and PA, the possibility of Hamas participating in the Palestinian legislative elections, and the Hamas position on waging a continued struggle against the Israelis from territories under the PA's control.

The Hamas delegation's official spokesman, Muhammad Nazzal, told MENA that yesterday the two sides discussed the issue of national unity and means of overcoming any threats to it. He added that the two sides agreed on preventing and condemning any inter-Palestinian fighting, defending and protecting the Palestinian people's unity, and averting any bloodshed. He said that past relations between the two sides and the practices that threatened them were also reviewed.

Nazzal went on to say that today the two delegations will discuss several issues related to the overall relations, the future of the Palestinian issue, and Hamas' positions on continuing the armed struggle and on participation in the elections.

Hasan 'Usfur, member of the PA delegation to the talks, said that yesterday's talks were frank and positive and a number of issues on bilateral relations were raised. He said he is optimistic about the outcome of these talks.

Hamas Maintains Election Boycott

LD1912160095 Tehran IRNA in English
1544 GMT 19 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Athens, Dec. 19, IRNA — PNA [Palestine National Authority]-chairman Yasir 'Arafat will take part in the ongoing dialogue between the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, and the PNA, upon the conclusion of his visit to Qatar, said a dispatch from al-Quds [Jerusalem] Tuesday.

Both Hamas and PNA sources are expressing cautious optimism at the way the dialogue has been going in Egypt since Monday.

Hamas insiders privately say that the dialogue will not change their movement's decision to boycott the election scheduled to be held on 20 January.

According to Palestinian Islamist sources, Hamas has instructed its delegates in Cairo not to compromise on four red lines.

First, boycott of the election is absolute, and second, there shall be no unilateral and unconditional stoppage to armed resistance against the Zionist state.

Third, Hamas will not recognize the legitimacy of 'Arafat's Palestine National Authority (PNA), and finally Hamas will insist on the dismantlement of all Jewish settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Vatican Official Arrives, Meets al-Husayni

*JN1912202395 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic
1900 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] A Palestinian delegation headed by Faysal al-Husayni, official in charge of the Jerusalem file, and the Vatican secretary for relations with states held a meeting at the Islamic Awqaf Directorate near al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied Jerusalem today.

They discussed ways to promote relations between Palestine and the Vatican, as well as the situation in the holy city in light of Israel's encroachment on the holy shrines.

Affirms Jerusalem 'Occupied'

*JN2012091395 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic
0600 GMT 20 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] Monsignor Jean-Louis Tauran, Vatican secretary for relations with states, has reiterated the Vatican's firm stand on the city of Jerusalem, which views the city as part of the territories occupied in 1967.

These remarks by Tauran were made after a meeting last night with several Palestinian figures, including Faysal al-Husayni, the official in charge of the Jerusalem file.

During the meeting, the conferees discussed the peace process and stressed the need to find an appropriate solution to the problem of the occupied city of Jerusalem.

It is to be recalled that Le'a Rabin, wife of the former Israeli prime minister, has recently claimed that Pope John Paul II affirmed to her that the Vatican recognizes Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Israel Agrees To Repatriate 80 Families From Egypt

*JN2012085395 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic
0600 GMT 20 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] The Israeli authorities have officially approved the repatriation of 80 Palestinian families residing in the Canada Camp in Egypt to Tall al-Sultan in Rafah.

Dr. Nabil Sha'th, minister of planning and international cooperation, has asserted that the required funds for the resettlement of the returning families have been earmarked.

After a meeting yesterday with Israeli Health Minister Efrayim Sne and Oren Shahor, coordinator of Israeli

activities in the Palestinian territories, Dr. Sha'th announced Israel's acceptance to establish a railway linking Ashdod to Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip and the Egyptian border, to build another railway in the eastern Gaza Strip to be used for transporting goods, and to launch an electrified rail network among the Strip's cities to transport passengers.

The Palestinians and Israelis also agreed to establish an international Palestinian-Israeli hospital, and to submit a study on a flyover linking the Gaza Strip to the West Bank to the donor nations conference, slated to convene in Paris on 9 January.

The flyover, which will be built at a cost of \$200 million, will extend over 40 km.

Opinion Poll Shows Increase in 'Arafat's Popularity

*JN1912195595 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic
1900 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] The results of a latest opinion poll No. 21 conducted by the Palestinian Research and Studies Center in Nabulus showed an increase in President Yasir 'Arafat's popularity.

The poll showed that 68.5 percent of those polled will vote for 'Arafat as president of the National Authority in the 20 January elections. In addition, 55 percent will vote for the Fatah Movement in the upcoming legislative elections, 10 percent for the Hamas Movement, and 11 percent for independents.

The opinion poll, which was published today, addressed such issues as the elections, redeployment, and the peace process in the wake of the assassination of Israeli prime minister Yitzhaq Rabin.

The sample included in the poll totaled 1,168 people from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Arab-Israeli Talks

Rabinovich: Agreement in Principle Not Expected

*TA2012054195 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew
0500 GMT 20 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] Itamar Rabinovich, Israel's ambassador to Washington, said that in the upcoming round of talks with Syria, which starts in another week, even an agreement in principle should not be expected.

Our Washington correspondent Hayim Zissowitz reports that the location for the meeting has not yet been decided and that several alternative sites near Washington are being considered.

The State Department spokesman said today that the composition of the Israeli and Syrian delegations has not yet been decided on.

Contacts Reported Between Syrian, Israeli Officials
TA2012115795 Tel Aviv MA'ARIV in Hebrew
20 Dec 95 p 11

[Report by Ben Kaspit]

[FBIS Translated Text] A senior Syrian Government official spoke over the telephone with a senior Israeli official in Jerusalem over the last few days. The two officials discussed the peace process between Syria and Israel, its prospects, and the possibilities of economic cooperation between the two countries. Both officials agreed to maintain contacts in the future in conjunction with developments in the peace process.

Jerusalem has received reports over the past few days saying that Dr. Rafiq Juwayjati, head of the Syrian Foreign Ministry's Political Department, will lead the Syrian delegation to the talks in Washington. Israeli officials reacted positively to this report. As recalled, Dr. Juwayjati met in Brussels several weeks ago with Eytan Bentzur, Foreign Ministry deputy director general, and demonstrated great openness while expressing his full support for the promotion of the peace process.

Jerusalem has recently received further indications of Syria's optimism and openness prior to the resumption of the negotiations. Another report, this time from Lebanon, states that Lebanese Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz is extremely knowledgeable about domestic Israeli politics.

The reports disclose that at a recent meeting between Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' and a senior Japanese Foreign Ministry official, the Syrian minister expressed great interest in the multilateral talks between the Arab countries and Israel. Al-Shar' was particularly interested in issues pertaining to tourism and to the Middle East regional bank. His Japanese interlocutor received the impression that Syria was very interested in joining activities in these fields.

The Japanese envoy also spoke with Buwayz, who noted that the negotiations between Lebanon and Israel would not hinge on the successful conclusion of the talks on the Syrian track.

The Lebanese stressed that any arrangement with Israel must be based on Security Council Resolution 425 (which calls for a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon), pointing out that in the event of an Israeli pullout, the Lebanese Government was convinced that it would have no problem restraining Hizballah and halting its activity.

Just like al-Shar', the Lebanese minister regaled the Japanese official with detailed and surprising analyses of the internal political situation in Israel, asserting that "Peres is more determined and decisive with regard to the peace process; Rabin was hesitant." "Nevertheless," Buwayz added, "it seems that the Labor Party will not remain quiet for long. Today Baraq is cooperating with Peres but there is no guarantee that he will continue to do so in the future."

Syria-Israel Optimism Said Due to Peres' Style
MM1912153195 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic
19 Dec 95 p 17

[Article by Raghidah Dirgham: "Peres' Mark"]

[FBIS Translated Text] There are some new signs on the Syrian-Israeli negotiations track, leading to the optimistic view that a fundamental breakthrough may soon be achieved, since the three sides concerned, Syria, Israel, and the United States, are determined to step up the qualitative shift in this track.

Following his talks with Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad and Israeli Premier Shim'on Peres, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher announced the resumption of the Syrian-Israeli negotiations in two short intensive rounds, followed by Christopher's return to the region on 10 January 1996 to discuss the outcome of the two rounds of negotiations with al-Asad and Peres and to make decisions regarding the subsequent steps. He has made it clear that he is prepared to make shuttle visits if necessary.

Among the most remarkable factors which led to this development is the fact, stressed by a U.S. official, that "the Syrian and Israeli sides have removed all preconditions for resuming the negotiations." Israel was adamant that any negotiations must be preceded by military contacts, and Syria insisted on agreeing on the content before anything else. Prior to former Premier Yitzhaq Rabin's assassination, the Syrian-Israeli track was frozen as a result of Rabin's insistence on limiting the negotiations to security issues and his insistence on a land-based early warning station, which was categorically rejected by President al-Asad.

With the removal of "all preconditions" it is assumed that Peres has removed a major obstacle in the way of resuming the negotiations, namely the land-based early warning station, and replaced it with superior U.S. technology, guaranteeing the effectiveness of the airborne early warning station on which the Syrian side agrees. It is assumed that when Syria finds this Israeli position in the negotiations, when they resume somewhere near Washington, it will respond with positive steps. Away

from the negotiating table, however, it will try to convince Israeli public opinion of its intention to normalize, as far as the negotiations are concerned, by upgrading them to foreign ministers' level as expected. Also, the fact that the next round of negotiations will not open with a specific agenda or any conditions will give the sides an opportunity to perform a qualitative shift in the art of negotiation, from tactics to strategy. The next round will assume a different style from the previous ones, as it will bear the mark of Peres, who has more courage and determination than his predecessor Rabin.

Peres neither wants to limit the negotiations to one side only nor does he want to freeze them, and according to him "the art of negotiation is invention and innovation and not vacillating between the slopes of the past." Peres spoke also of the need to pay "the full price" for peace with Syria, an indication of withdrawal from the Golan. He is convinced that peace in the region must be comprehensive so that it can be complemented in the political, security, and economic fields. Peres' personality is one of the factors which led Syria to respond to him. President al-Asad and Peres share the conviction that both are serious in their quest for peace. For this reason they have offered each other, through Christopher, "ideas and views" which led the U.S. secretary of state to say: "It is clear that we are entering a new phase in the negotiations," adding: "It is a new game, a new era, and a new start, and, together, we shall forge ahead." He announced that there is the intention of reaching an agreement "as quickly as possible" and that there is now "a new atmosphere."

Christopher's tour has highlighted also that the U.S. Administration has decided to switch from the part of the negotiations' "broker" to that of an active partner undertaking shuttle visits in support of direct negotiations and offering its ideas and views. This is also a new positive development. If the three sides continue in their new direction, they might soon achieve the desired breakthrough.

Talks Under Way to Advance Hebron Redeployment

TA1912145695 Gaza AL-HAYAH AL-JADIDAH
in Arabic 17 Dec 95 p 1

[FBIS Translated Text] Hebron, AL-HAYAH AL-JADIDAH — An official Palestinian source in the Fatah district committee affirmed that redeployment in Hebron will be advanced to 1 January 1996.

The source said that intensive talks are under way between the Palestinian and Israeli sides in order to begin the redeployment in Hebron before the date of elections for the National Authority's legislative council, so that the citizens will feel as safe as other residents in various Palestinian towns.

The source added that the redeployment in Hebron is expected to be completed before 13 January and that President Yasir 'Arafat is expected to arrive in the town 14-15 January.

Algeria

Zeroual, French Assembly Speaker Discuss Ties

*LD2012122195 Algiers Radio Algiers Network
in French 1130 GMT 20 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] Philippe Seguin, speaker of the French National Assembly, is in Algiers. He has been received by President Liamine Zeroual. Mr. Seguin made a statement after the meeting:

[Begin Seguin recording] I am in Algiers for a visit which I have been planning for a while, but which has taken on a particular character because the Algerian president wished to see me and, second, and in this context, the French president asked me to convey a message to him.

So I am in Algiers to contribute to the improvement of relations between Algeria and France. These relations should be friendly and confident. If there were any misunderstandings, we should clear the air. Algeria and France must cooperate, must listen to each other, and must talk to each other. I am very happy about the talks I had with President Zeroual. When I leave I will take a message to the French president, and I am happy to do so. [end recording]

Philippe Seguin will also hold talks with Abdelkader Bensalah, chairman of the National Transitional Council.

FIS Leaders Discuss Upcoming National Conference

*MM2012104295 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic
20 Dec 95 pp 1, 6*

[Unattributed report: "In Algerian Capital Madani Discusses Participation in 'National Conference' With Boukhamkham and Djedi"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Algiers, AL-HAYAH — Authoritative Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) sources have confirmed that the leader of the outlawed Front, Shaykh Abassi Madani, is now all but "a political prisoner" and that he is currently staying in a villa in a suburb of the Algerian capital.

The sources added that the FIS leader has been allowed to meet with Shaykhs Abdelkader Boukhamkham and Ali Djedi, and that a meeting bringing the three leaders together was held this week, during which they discussed the proposed formulas for participation in the "national conference" scheduled to be held next year on a date yet to be set.

The sources expect Shaykh Madani to be released with Shaykh Abdelkader Hachani. The sources did not rule out a pardon for Shaykh Rabah Kebir and some FIS leaders who have not been implicated in violent actions.

The sources pointed out that the meeting of the three FIS leaders broached the idea of relaunching the party under a new name in order to participate in the legislative elections.

Some FIS leaders inside the country are considerably optimistic this time. It seems that they have been promised that the dialogue process will be conducted under the supervision of President Liamine Zeroual personally.

The sources said that President Zeroual has been put in the picture as regards the contacts between representatives of the two sides. [passage omitted]

Paper Reports Zeroual Surgery, Assassination Bid

*LD1912135595 Paris Radio France International
in French 1230 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] The Algerian daily EL WATAN has reported that President Liamine Zeroual has undergone eye surgery recently in a foreign country, without naming the country in question. The paper also reported on rumors of an assassination attempt targeting the Algerian head of state just after his election in November.

Car-Bomb Explosion Kills Two 'Terrorists'

*LD1912174095 Algiers Radio Algiers Network
in French 1700 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] Early this morning, security services gave chase to a vehicle carrying two suspicious-looking individuals near the housing estate of Kadi, in Tizi Ouzou. The vehicle, which turned out to be booby-trapped, exploded killing the two occupants who were identified as "terrorists". Once again the civilian population was spared tragic consequences thanks to the vigilance of the security services. Forty people sustained minor injuries in the blast. Two others are still under medical observation at the hospital.

Bomb Explosion in Mostaganem Injures 23

*LD2012105595 Algiers Radio Algiers Network
in Arabic 1000 GMT 20 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] In a statement today, the security services said that a bomb placed near a cafe in the center of the city of Mostaganem exploded at 0650 GMT.

The same source added that the initial outcome of the explosion was that 23 people were injured, three of them seriously. The explosion also caused significant material damage.

Egypt

Reportage, Official Comment on Yemen-Eritrea Dispute

Mubarak Comments

NC1912141995 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1345 GMT 19 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 19 Dec (MENA) — President Mubarak called on both Yemen and Eritrea to resort to reason and logic, avert bloodshed, adhere to international charters, and solve their dispute through peaceful means.

In a statement during a visit to Sharm al-Shaykh, President Mubarak expressed his hope that the dispute between Yemen and Eritrea, "two friendly states," will be resolved in line with international charters through peaceful means.

He said: I am confident that by resorting to reason and logic they could find a solution to this issue. There is absolutely no need to shed blood, because both states belong to the same region.

Mubarak was asked about Egypt's role in the next few days in containing the dispute. He replied: We might speak with the two states and offer as much help as we can to resolve this dispute, in addition to other efforts being made in several directions.

Musa Urges 'Peaceful Solution'

NC2012113595 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1050 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 20 Dec (MENA) — Egypt has repeated its call for an immediate peaceful solution to the Yemeni-Eritrean dispute.

This came in a statement by Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa, who added that the conflict affects the security of the entire region. He also noted that the issue is currently a subject of negotiations.

Musa, who was speaking after President Hosni Mubarak's meeting today with Algerian Foreign Minister Mohamed Salah Dembri, said that both Yemen and Eritrea are interested in settling the issue peacefully and preventing the dispute from turning into a wider military conflict.

Musa pointed out that if matters are allowed to escalate, the situation will be uncontrollable.

Asked to comment on the accusations made by some quarters that Israel is intervening in the Yemeni-Eritrean dispute, Musa said: I cannot say anything definite about

this issue. All matters have a certain logic, politics have assumptions, and this issue has certain implications.

'Amr Musa declared: Egypt is of course interested in seeing this issue settled politically without delay and prevented from escalating. Red Sea issues are not simple affairs. Egypt certainly has a position on this issue, namely, that Yemen and Eritrea should settle the affair peacefully and swiftly.

Asked if Egypt is mediating between the two countries, Musa replied: You heard President Mubarak's declaration yesterday that Egypt and other parties are willing to mediate, but it is clear that Eritrea and Yemen are communicating with each other and discussing the affair. Egypt has been informed of developments as they occurred.

Musa stressed that this dispute can affect the entire region's security.

Eritrean Embassy Releases Statement

NC1812194995 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1833 GMT 18 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 18 Dec (MENA) — A statement released by the Eritrean Embassy in Cairo has reasserted that Eritrea is ready to resolve its differences with Yemen over the Hanish Archipelago located at the Bab el-Mandeb entrance. The statement pointed out that the Yemeni soldiers who were taken prisoners in the undesired battles in the last few days will be released without mediation efforts and will return home at the proper time. It stressed that the bonds of fraternity and history between the two countries are greater than transient incidents. It noted that the Yemeni government made a claim early in November that it had not raised for many decades and embarked on an unexpected action by landing military units to camp in these islands. It said that despite this sudden and unexpected measure, the Eritrean Government opted for reason and for addressing this problem through quiet diplomacy.

The statement also noted that the Eritrean Government sent a high-ranking delegation to Sanaa in November and proposed three points for talks on holding an urgent meeting between the two parties to agree on basic principles to resolve the differences and request international arbitration binding to both parties. The statement said that the Yemeni government clung to its claim to the islands and to continue the talks. Agreement was reached to hold another meeting of committees in Asmara on 7 December. The statement stressed that the Eritrean party agreed during the meeting that the talks should be held under international mediation and arbitration. The Eritrean party wanted to continue the

talks but the Yemeni party's remark that "it will not come for talks over the Hanish archipelago" led to postponing the talks until February 1996. It pointed out that while the Eritrean Government was waiting for the date with sincere desire, Yemeni units on Friday evening threatened and provoked our units in the (Suyul Hanish) and on Saturday they launched a ground and aerial assault on the Eritrean forces in Hanish al-Kabir. The statement said that these clashes that lasted for two days left many Yemeni personnel dead or wounded, 180 others were taken prisoners, and one helicopter was shot down. The Eritrean forces sustained six dead and three wounded.

Papers Call For Peaceful End

NC2012075595 *Cairo MENA in Arabic*
0620 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 20 Dec (MENA) — The Cairo press underline in their editorials today, Wednesday, the need to resolve the Yemeni-Eritrean conflict through peaceful means and note that regional wars have ceased to be a means for ending conflicts following the collapse of barriers between east and west.

AL-AHRAM underlines the need for talks between the Red Sea basin countries on a mechanism for ensuring a system of regulating relations so that tensions between them would not rise to the level of affecting navigation or the environment and turn the Red Sea into another hot point in the Middle East.

The paper calls for giving more attention to the Red Sea region in the coming stage in light of the increase in differences between these countries in the past few years, such as the seizure of fishing boats, pollution of regional waters, and the weapons and drugs trade.

It adds that a dire need for cooperation between the countries of the region has risen as a result of a number of problems which emerged in the wake of armed clashes that erupted between these countries, such as the refugees problem.

AL-JUMHURIYAH stresses that Red Sea safety is part of the security and safety of the entire Middle East. It notes that the clashes between Yemen and Eritrea draws the attention of all the countries of the region to the importance of establishing peace.

It says that the ties between Eritrea and Yemen give them the opportunity to resolve their differences calmly and through a fruitful dialogue because negotiations are one of the most important traits of the new world order. It notes that dialogue recently succeeded in putting an end to the Balkan war which raged for four years and destroyed everything in its path. It adds that the three

involved parties extended their hands to each other in reconciliation and in order to build a new future for the former Yugoslavia.

On the other hand, AL-AKHBAR calls on the Arab League to intervene to put an end to this situation before it develops into something more dangerous and turns the Red Sea into a bomb, specially after the Arab League's recognition of Yemen's sovereignty over the disputed islands.

The paper regrets the Eritrean policy of using its military forces to seize one of the Yemeni island after the Arab and Islamic nations had supported the Eritrean rebels in their war to gain independence.

It notes that this armed conflict has revealed the existence of some suspicious factors. One of them were the large quantities of Israeli-made weapons and gunboats used in the Eritrean attack. This confirms some diplomatic circles's accusation that Israel is behind this conflict following signs of possible oil finds in the disputed islands.

Musa Reports on OAU Meeting, Comments on Sudan

NC2012131595 *Cairo MENA in Arabic*
1120 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 20 Dec (MENA) — President Husni Mubarak received today a report from Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa about the meetings of the OAU's [Organization of African Unity] conflict management apparatus which concluded in Addis Ababa yesterday.

After his reception by the president, 'Amr Musa stated that the conflict management apparatus does not have the power to impose sanctions but has urged Sudan to hand over to Ethiopia the suspects in the attempt on President Mubarak's life and also to break all its links with terrorism.

Musa asserted that the member countries of the OAU's conflict management apparatus do not approve of Sudan's refusal to comply with the resolutions passed by the apparatus. He added that the African countries which attended the meeting clearly showed their dismay at the increasing forms of terrorism and the proliferation of terrorist attacks and were disturbed that Sudan has failed to exonerate itself of the accusations of terrorism that have been leveled at it. He pointed out that Sudan has not made a denial that is acceptable to the African states. Musa pointed out that a denial is not enough unless it is supported by evidence.

The foreign minister noted that there is a growing inclination to take the issue of Sudan's sponsoring of

terrorism to other international forums if Sudan refuses to comply with the conflict management apparatus' decisions and hand over the wanted suspects to Ethiopia. He said that recourse to such international bodies is being considered now.

He added that with regard to this issue, Ethiopia sees that its sovereignty has been violated and if the conflict management apparatus or the OAU as a whole fails to reach a solution, it will resort to other organizations. Musa stressed that Sudan must immediately implement the African conflict management apparatus' decision in order to spare itself further action.

Asked if the matter will be taken to the UN Security Council if Sudan refuses to comply with the conflict management apparatus' resolutions, the Egyptian foreign minister said: We have not yet discussed this point. Additionally, no action is being contemplated to freeze Sudan's membership in the OAU if it continues to disregard the resolutions.

Musa Returns From Addis Ababa Meeting

NC1912210595 *Cairo MENA in English*
2016 GMT 19 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, Dec 19 (MENA) — Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa returned home this evening from Addis Ababa after a three-day visit to Ethiopia, during which he led the Egyptian delegation to the meetings of the foreign ministers of the Mechanism of Peaceful Settlement of African Disputes.

The conferees discussed a number of issues, including accusing Sudan of planning the attack against the motorcade of President Husni Mubarak in Addis Ababa and of supporting terrorism.

The conferees also demanded that Sudan should adhere to the resolutions of the Organization of African Unity, particularly those on handing over the three suspects involved in the attack, said Musa.

Answering a question on the escalating dispute between Yemen and Eritrea, Musa said that the two sides should resort to negotiations for a peaceful settlement of the issue.

Musa noted that he received in Addis Ababa today the Eritrean ambassador to Ethiopia, who conveyed a message from the Eritrean foreign minister, in which he confirmed Eritrea's keenness on putting an end to the dispute through peaceful means.

Russian-Israeli Military Agreement Criticized

NC1812115095 *Cairo AL-AHRAM in Arabic*
10 Dec 95 p 11

[Article by Ihsan Bakr: "After It Lost Its Role!"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Kremlin leaders appear to have woken up from a long sleep. They realized — or almost — that they had been kicked out of the Middle East so they rushed for a piece of the cake before the U.S. partner swallowed it all.

It seems Moscow's leaders have woken up and are trying to restore a role they enjoyed for 20 years or more.

Four years after the peace process was launched in Madrid the Russians decided they should gain something, anything. So they sent their defense minister to the region. But they went the wrong way, they went in the opposite direction. They did not go to Damascus or Cairo, but directly to Tel Aviv, competing with the U.S. partner and offering a draft regional security system for the Middle East and the Gulf!

The official Russian news agency ITAR-TASS said Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev proposed during his visit to Israel a new security system and offered assistance in establishing it. Grachev, on the first visit to Israel by a Russian defense minister, said: "Moscow is pursuing a balanced policy in the Middle East, maintaining military relations with both the Arab countries and Israel." ITAR-TASS cited him as saying that the agreement with Israel expresses Russia's interest in Israel's national security. So it is not only the United States that is interested in Israeli security. Grachev noted that Russia and Israel have the opportunity to cooperate in designing and developing weapons. He concluded his visit to Israel by inspecting the occupied Syrian Golan Heights and the northern areas on the Israeli-Lebanese border to learn the importance of the Syrian heights and the situation in occupied south Lebanon. Grachev's visit was crowned by the signing of a military cooperation treaty with Israel. The treaty was signed for Israel by Shim'on Peres, the Israeli prime minister and defense minister.

While the treaty was being signed, the Israeli deputy defense minister was threatening Syria with a possible Israeli military operation to convince Syria and Lebanon to stop attacks against Israel from Lebanese territory.

The dimensions of the Russian-Israeli military cooperation agreement are not clear. But the immediate reaction by Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa reflected the anxiety in the region over this development. Musa said: "Any security concept in the Middle East that fails to consider

the elements of peace cannot meet regional security requirements. This agreement has nothing to do with a just and genuine peace, which for Egypt means a serious discussion of disarmament, especially the removal of weapons of mass destruction, not the introduction of new weapons to the region." Musa added: "Egypt's position is clear on the need to establish a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East as a central point for any security discussions in the region now or in future. No security situation in the Middle East must be imposed from outside. And it must not come through agreements by a state in the region and a foreign power. Any disturbance of the security balance in the region will trigger efforts to redress the balance."

Russia is interested in Israel's national security and is concluding an agreement for military cooperation with it. This comes when reports from Tel Aviv speak of an Israeli program to develop antimissile missiles and spy satellites under the pretext of confronting the so-called Iraqi and Iranian threats. This five-year Israeli military program, called "Plan 2000," covers the period from 1996 to 2000 and considers the growing threat by countries that have no border with Israel, such as Iran and Iraq.

According to Israeli sources, the plan is based on the supposition that Iran will possess the nuclear weapon and that the Israeli military deterrent should concentrate on Israel's position in the region as a nuclear power and on its possession of missiles and a strong air force capable of launching long-range attacks. We recall here that Israel has an arsenal of between 100 and 200 nuclear warheads in addition to the "Jericho" missiles that have a 150-km range.

Yet Moscow is talking about its interest in Israel's national security. Meanwhile, the deputy Israeli defense minister came out with clear warnings to Syria as part of Shim'on Peres' muscle-flexing as prime minister and defense minister. The regime in Israel appears to want to remind its Arab neighbors that the tight-knit Israeli club is there and ready for use to impose peace according to Israeli specifications.

Israel's new leadership, represented by Shim'on Peres, is trying to look decisive as it faces the domestic situation. Yitzhaq Rabin died at the hands of a Jewish extremist and his successor wants to show that he can continue his policy and augment its assets among the Israeli electorate. Israel's doves have fangs and talons that enable them to impose their policy wrapped in peace slogans.

While declaring a policy of deterrence, issuing warnings to Syria, and then talking about peace, Israel believes that the general climate around it following the Pales-

tinian agreements, Jordanian normalization, recognition, and public and tacit agreements with some Arab capitals has been finalized and cannot be retracted. So Israel has nothing to fear by imposing the peace it wants with Syria.

Moscow is losing much and squandering its remaining assets in the Arab world. It will not help establish a just peace, because it has been isolated for four years and will get no piece of the cake. It will be difficult for it to gain a foothold, because the U.S. partner has outrun it and devoured the whole cake.

Since the Russian leadership has now pledged to protect Israel's national security, we might ask: Who will protect pan-Arab security from real Israeli threats that are represented by a nuclear arsenal and occupation of the Golan and south Lebanon?

These are spoiled goods the Russian leadership is trying to market, just like the hundreds of spoiled goods that are swamping Moscow's streets and that are protected by the new Russian mafia following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Russian bear that has stirred after a long sleep is now trying to catch up with what it missed and is trying to nibble a morsel of the promised cake. But it forgets that it has turned into a "false witness," the role of which will be no more than rubberstamping arrangements, maps, and agreements concluded without it.

Despite everything, peace remains remote. The peoples of the region have yet to have their final say.

Algerian Foreign Minister on Talks With Mubarak
NC2012122895 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1115 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 20 Dec (MENA) — President Husni Mubarak received a message from Algerian President Liamine Zeroual when he met with Algerian Foreign Minister Mohamed Salah Dembri this morning.

Following the meeting, Dembri said that the situation in the Arab region, the outcome of the meetings of the Mechanism for Settling African Conflicts (MSAC) in Addis Ababa, and a number of other issues of mutual interest were discussed during the meeting.

The Algerian foreign minister described President Mubarak as a leader famous for his wisdom and sound opinions. He said: I listened to his ideas on joint action in international and Arab forums.

He added that the African ministers who concluded their MSAC meetings in Addis Ababa yesterday issued a

statement on the failed attempt to assassinate President Mubarak in June.

In reply to a question on whether the issue of imposing specific sanctions on countries that sponsor terrorism was discussed during the MSAC meetings, Dembri said that there are several Arab and Islamic resolutions. He recalled the agreement that was reached during the Organization of the Islamic Conference meeting in Casablanca in February on a law that demands all Muslim countries not encourage in terrorism.

On the steps that could be taken against the Sudanese government following the MSAC meetings, the Algerian foreign minister said: We have to wait some time because the MSAC is dealing with the issue and has taken several resolutions. Sudan has expressed its desire to help. Additionally, there is a rule requiring that all resolutions be respected. We have to wait until the March 1966 meeting before assessing the situation.

On the situation inside Algeria, Dembri stressed that the situation is normal and that the enthusiasm shown by the Algerian people during the presidential elections remains and will continue until the coming legislative and municipal elections are held.

Labor Party, MB Officials Interviewed

NC1912104195 Beirut AL-SAFIR in Arabic
12 Dec 95 p 13

[Report on interviews with Ma'mun al-Hudaybi, deputy general guide of the MB, and Labor Party Secretary General 'Adil Husayn by 'Amr Nasif in Cairo — date not given]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] Ma'mun al-Hudaybi, deputy general guide of the Muslim Brotherhood [MB], has stated that the Egyptian regime "has shut all doors to the MB, depriving it of all means to spread its word. In the past, government writers and the regime's officials used to criticize the MB and accuse it of negligence if it did not spread its word and confront the violent groups. Now the regime has put the MB in one corner [with the violent groups] after it used to stress and insist that the MB is moderate and against violence. Such talk used to come from the mouth of the interior ministers and President Mubarak."

Al-Hudaybi added: "Now the Egyptian regime is doing its utmost to erase the MB from the map." He indicated that "any regime which tries to abolish the MB through a decision is shortsighted and is ignorant of history. Several regimes and leaders tried this in the past; these regimes have ended and these rulers have died but the MB has remained."

Answering a question on the regime's attitude toward the MB, al-Hudaybi said: "It was proven beyond doubt that the regime sought to prevent the MB from entering parliament. It referred MB leaders to military courts for this reason, not because it believed that the MB was moderate but suddenly woke up to find they were terrorists."

Asked about the reason for this change in the regime's stance, al-Hudaybi said: "It seems that the Egyptian regime has decided to adopt a dictatorship course. It has back pedaled on democracy and decided to rule the country with iron and fire. Seizing on its success in containing terrorist acts committed by violent groups, it has felt the ecstasy of victory and decided to discipline the other forces because it could no longer bear to hear a word of criticism. The regime needed the MB and other forces to support it in its battle against terrorism. When it finished this battle or imagined that it triumphed, it turned on the opposition members who do not carry a weapon except the weapon of the word to suppress them. I had imagined that the target was the MB but the recent parliamentary elections showed that all the opposition members are targeted by the regime."

"The regime made [Labor Party leader] Ibrahim Shukri lose. Ibrahim Shukri did not lose any election held under any dictatorial regimes in the past, even during the monarchy. Forget Ibrahim Shukri; some might say that he lost because of his alliance with the disbanded MB. The regime made the leader of the Nasirite Party and all the members of the Nasirite Party lose, except one member, who won perhaps because he hailed from a strong family in Upper Egypt and the security services thought it was unwise to tamper with the ballots. Before the elections, the Nasirites had announced that they would not ally themselves with the MB. Moreover, their historic hostility to the MB is known by the current regime."

"The regime also made many Wafd Party and independent candidates lose. These were not allies of MB candidates but were their rivals in some constituencies. The regime also made Christian candidates lose. Were the Copts allies of the MB to deserve to be defeated in such a ridiculous manner? This made a shameful image of us before the world and looked as if the Muslims in Egypt were laying in wait for the Christians. In fact, the Egyptian Government lay in wait for all forces, be they MB, Wafd, communists, or Nasirites."

Asked what the MB will do in the future, al-Hudaybi said: "We will change our methods. We are now surrounded but we will establish alliances with the parties, file lawsuits, act among the masses in any way,

and do our best to dissolve the new parliament, which has falsified the will of the voters."

Asked whether this means the MB will establish an alliance with the Nasirite Party despite the historic differences between the two groups, al-Hudaybi said: "We will ally ourselves with the blue djinni!!! We will ally ourselves with the Nasirites and non-Nasirites. I was the first to call for the alliance of the national parties and forces at the press conference held at the Nasirite Party premises. I said we must forget our party differences and confront the government's onslaught on democracy. The other forces are in disagreement with each other. If we are in agreement, we could become one party and not various parties. The existence of ideological and political differences among us is known, but we are facing a catastrophe threatening the homeland. It is our duty to forget our differences and to rally together. The MB principle is that we must cooperate on what we agree and forgive each other on what we disagree."

[Nasif] Is there still an alliance with the Labor Party?

[Al-Hudaybi] Yes, it is still on and stronger than ever.

[Nasif] But it is reported that the alliance has been weakened because of recent differences?

[Al-Hudaybi] Even if this is true, the recent crisis caused by the government must prompt all of us to strengthen this alliance and make it stronger. I tell you that we will establish an alliance with all the parties with which we have big differences. This applies more so to the party with which our differences can be counted on fingers.

[Nasif] Will the alliance include the National Progressive Unionist Grouping [NPUG]?

[Al-Hudaybi] Ask the NPUG. This party seems to be hostile to all other forces. Would it agree to be allied with the Brothers?

[Nasif] Why is the NPUG hostile to other parties and forces?

[Al-Hudaybi] I am the Brothers' deputy general guide, not the deputy of [NPUG leader] Khalid Muhyi-al-Din.

[Nasif] But how do you explain that?

[Al-Hudaybi] This is well known and what is known needs no explanation.

[Nasif] But I do not know that.

[Al-Hudaybi] At the news conference held at the Nasirite Party headquarters it was evident to everyone through news agency and journalists questions and through the NPUG representative's speech that there was a deal between this party and the authorities. This deal led to forging the elections in Khalid Muhyi-

al-Din's favor. Besides, the NPUG representative refused to sign the parties' statement before reading it, even though the statement contained nothing that would prompt the NPUG not to sign. Also the NPUG representative began and ended his speech by attacking the Brothers although the time was not appropriate.

For his part, Labor Party Secretary General 'Adil Husayn has emphasized that the focus now will be on delegitimizing the current People's Assembly and repeating the general elections because this will decide everything. He said if this People's Assembly remains, the coup against the Constitution and multiparty system will have succeeded. This, he added, will lead to further autocracy and restrictions on public freedoms.

If we, the Labor Party, and the nationalist opposition manage to check this coup, new horizons of democratic concepts will emerge, he said. He added: "I say that the issue I am focusing on now is the repetition of the general elections."

Husayn was asked on the means that will be used to delegitimize the People's assembly. He replied: "The mobilization of various factions of the popular forces. Each faction has its own methods of action and pressure. The cultured, the intellectuals, and journalists have their own means and the parties will seek to hold general conferences to draw the masses into this battle.

[Nasif] Do you think that the regime will submit to this?

[Husayn] Naturally it might submit if the popular pressures are strong enough. For example, a law that was supposed to reorganize the formation of trade unions was issued. Another law violating the freedom of expression and press was issued, but to date they are unable to implement it because of the resistance to this law. Moreover, as parties, we will turn to the legal system to obtain an injunction to bring down the new parliament. You may like to know that the judiciary has ruled the annulment of the 84th and 87th assemblies which did not complete their terms. We are confident that the judiciary's verdicts will annul this assembly even if the regime does not like it.

[Nasif] Do you believe that there will be an alliance among the parties to confront this situation?

[Husayn] A joint action by the parties already began through the news conference that was held at the Nasirite Party headquarters last Saturday. A determination to adopt unified measures was evident at the conference. We demand all parties to stand as one rank to face the techniques of the ruling party and the Egyptian regime. Evidently these are methods that are adopted only by crazy people. Even crazy people would not use such methods.

[Nasif] There is talk about a dispute between the Labor Party and the Brothers that might wreck their alliance.

[Husayn] The dispute between us and the Brothers is over marginal issues and it can never terminate our alliance. We may differ every now and then and the Brothers may adopt stands unpleasant to us and vice versa, however, the Brothers remain our brothers and no dispute can stand in the way of the alliance and coordination between us and them.

[Nasif] At the news conference at the Nasirite Party headquarters, the opposition leaders were unanimous on the need to repeat the elections under international supervision while some people views this as compromising national sovereignty. What is your view?

[Husayn] We agree to hold elections under international and local supervision. After seeing what happened in the recent elections, a sane man cannot but demand this measure. The state used hooliganism in some constituencies and was absent in other constituencies, where it was replaced by hooligans, criminals, and hired prison frequenters.

Beside there is nothing wrong with international supervision of elections. We are not more nationalist than numerous countries that hold their elections under international supervision and control. Moreover, the regime has no right to speak about sovereignty because the regime relinquished it to hooligans and proficient criminals. The regime should be the last one to talk about sovereignty.

[Nasif] What do you think of the NPUG stand? Will you consent to it joining the parties' alliance to annul the legitimacy of the People's Assembly?

[Husayn] It was obvious at the recent news conference that the NPUG does not share the other opposition parties' declaration of frank and firm stands in rejecting a coup against constitution and pluralism.

[Nasif] There is talk about a deal between it and the regime.

[Husayn] I do not wish to speak about a deal, but it is certain to any observer that the number of seats won by the NPUG, compared with the seats taken by other parties, is not commensurate with this party's weight in the Egyptian street had the elections been free.

Court To Investigate Election Results *NC1812202695 Paris AFP in English* *1655 GMT 18 Dec 95*

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, Dec 18 (AFP) - Egypt's supreme administrative court will begin examining the validity of voting results for 114 of the 444 seats in

Egypt's newly-elected parliament next Sunday, legal sources said.

The court decided Monday to "investigate the basis" of complaints that voting for the seats were fraudulent after a lower court ordered the results voided because of rigging, the sources said.

The government appealed the lower court ruling on the grounds that only the parliament has the right to look into fraud claims in its own election results.

The complaints concerned results from a first round of legislative elections held on November 29.

In the second round held December 6, the ruling party or allied independents took 109 of the disputed seats. The rest went to opposition parties.

Libya

New Group Urges Jihad Against al-Qadhdhafi

MS2310132495 (Internet) soc.culture.algeria
in English 22 Oct 95

["Communique No. 1" issued by the Fighting Islamic Group of Libya — published as part of the American Islamic Group's "Islam Report"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Bismi Allah al-Rahman al-Raheem [in the name of Allah, the compassionate, the beneficent], Communique No. 1, Declaration of Establishment of The Fighting Islamic Group of Libya (FIG) "al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah al-Muqatilah"

All praise be to Mohammad, his family, and all of his companions...

The Fighting Islamic Group (FIG) announces its establishment to carry out the duty of Jihad in the way of Allah the High, and to remove people from worshipping people to worshipping the Lord of people, and from the narrowness of this life to the openness of the life hereafter and from the oppression of religions to the justice of Islam.

It is time for the Fighting Islamic Group of Libya to come out from the stage of secrecy to openness because of the sensitive stage in which Jihad work in Libya is passing through.

FIG also declares its responsibility for the blessed Jihad operation which started in the month of Muharram 1416 (May 1995) throughout Libya, east and west.

Facing the oppressors of this time — like al-Qadhdhafi — has become one of the utmost duties after believing in Allah the High so that the rule of Allah the Almighty is established, and the Muslims of Libya become blessed

with this Godly way in life, and so that they get rid of oppression and tyranny which they have tasted for over a quarter of a century in this dark time.

The removal of this apostate regime and saving the Muslim Libyan people from this endurance can not be accomplished without injuries, pains, sacrifices and money. But the good reward and all the rewards are in this Godly work; the Almighty Says: (Fighting is prescribed upon you, and ye dislike it. But it is possible that ye dislike a thing which is good for you, and that ye love a thing which is bad for you. But Allah knoweth, and ye know not) S.2 — A.216.

FIG calls on all Muslims in Libya to renew their repentance to Allah the Almighty and renew their abidance by His straight path and abiding by His rules, and renew the commitment to battle this apostate regime which exited the religion of Allah the Almighty... (FIG is calling on all Muslims in Libya) to take their place in this battle on the side of Mujahideen (fighters in the way of Allah) and not the side of the tyrant oppressors.

FIG sends its salutes of peace full of all meanings of brotherhood, love and support and allegiance to all Jihad groups that rose to defend Islam and the oppressed among the Muslims in any country in our Islamic world in order to return for this nation its power and might and to take revenge from those who humiliated its honors and sold its holy properties.

We pledge to Allah, blessings and glory to the Almighty, that we will continue on the blessed road of Jihad until the fall of oppression, and the rise (and establishment) of the religion of Allah the Glorious, and then the believers will be happy with the victory of Allah.

THE FIGHTING ISLAMIC GROUP — GENERAL POLICY

1. A Muslim group preparing and mobilizing to make Jihad against the enemies of Allah the Almighty, headed by the oppressors who rule by rules other than those of Allah until there is no persecution and the whole religion is Allah's.

2. Creed, Understanding, Methodology: Creed of "Ahl al-Sunnah Wal-Jama'ah" (people of the Sunnah and the -guided- Group) and on what was followed by the guided Salaf (predecessors) of the Companions and their followers and their followers.

Following by evidence of belief or action, while concentrating on the current circumstances in order to apply the rules of Allah.

3. The goal and the target: Pleasing of Allah the Almighty, and working to raise His religion and establish for Him on earth.

4. The way: Following the order of Allah the Almighty in Jihad in His way, and spreading His message through a Group that has a leader (Ameer) and a pledge to obey and listen and Jihad.

5. The method of work:

- a. Preparing personnel comprehensively.
- b. Utilizing the principle of secrecy as dictated by Shari'ah.
- c. Inform and spread the spirit of Jihad and encourage and instigate the believers to fight.
- d. Standing in support and allegiance of all other Jihad groups in any spot in the world.
- e. Not relying for help on any oppressive entity, and depending, after Allah the Almighty, on self resources to finance the Jihad march.

And Success is Only from Allah.. Thursday 25 Jumadi Awwal 1416 H. 18 October 1995 al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah al-Muqatilah

Sudan

Foreign Ministry Condemns Eritrean 'Aggression'
EA1912223495 Omdurman Republic of Sudan Radio
Network in Arabic 1900 GMT 19 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] An official source at the Foreign Ministry has stressed that Eritrea's open aggression against the Yemeni islands in the Red Sea proves what Sudan had repeatedly warned against in the past, namely, the dubious and planned role being performed by the Eritrean regime to destabilize the security and stability of the horn of Africa and the Red Sea region. In a statement to the SUDANESE NEWS AGENCY, the source said this aggression was part of the plan laid down to target certain states of the region. The source stressed that the stance of the Eritrean regime was unlike that of the brotherly Eritrean people and did not represent them. [passage omitted]

Government Warns Against Supporting Rebels

EA1912192695 Omdurman Republic of Sudan Radio
Network in Arabic 1300 GMT 19 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Sudan has warned of consequences should any state in the world aid the rebel movement or open political or media forums for it, which Sudan stressed would be considered a hostile act aimed against itself. Sudan called on countries persisting in this manner to review their stance.

Ambassador al-Tijani Salih Fadl, the director general of the political affairs department of the Foreign Ministry, while addressing the ministry's regular press briefing today, said the government was capable of tackling issues by all means, particularly through diplomacy. He said the [word indistinct] of hostilities and provocations against Sudan was clear and was the result of Sudan's independent decisionmaking and its cultural course, which is consistent with its heritage and faith [passage omitted].

The ambassador referred the visit to the United States early this week by rebel John Garang. He said Garang had met senior officials there and some members of the congress, besides delivering a number of lectures at the Institute of Strategic Studies. He said all this was aimed at giving the rebel movement political, media, and moral forums, a fact which, he added, confirmed what the government had been saying about America's support for the movement.

The ambassador pointed out that a number of European television stations had reported that the American White House had decided to provide rebel Garang with military assistance. He said this support was not just for Garang alone, but for all those who supported and sought to implement American policies in the region.

He said such support could destabilize the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea region. He said the recent occupation of Greater Hanish Island by the forces of the Eritrean regime was indicative of this. He said: This aggression serves as a warning and raises fears of other undertakings in the region in the pursuit of certain international policies.

Twelve Rebels Killed in Fighting in South

*NC1912153695 Cairo MENA in English
1416 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Khartoum, 19 Dec (MENA)—Twelve fighters of the Sudanese "mujahidin" forces were killed in fierce fighting between Sudanese armed forces and the rebels in the past two days, Sudanese sources told MENA today.

The sources said that among those killed was the son of the key Islamic Front leader, Ahmad Mahjub Haj Nur, the preacher of Khartoum University Mosque who is currently on the battlefield accompanied by Dr. Bashir Zakariya Imam, a professor of political science at the International University of Africa.

Sudan accuses Uganda and some other neighboring countries of invading its territory with the help of the Sudanese rebels.

Al-Bashir Repeats Amnesty Offer for Exiles

*EA1912193695 Omdurman Republic of Sudan Radio
Network in Arabic 1500 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] Staff Lieutenant General 'Umar al-Bashir, president of the Republic, has affirmed that the national march will move forward and will not be weakened by the weak or hindered by conspirators and agents. His Excellency reiterated the general amnesty for Sudanese citizens abroad and called on them to return to the homeland. He said this during a speech he delivered today during a huge public rally staged by the workers and farmers of al-Jazirah and al-Manaqil scheme in al-Mahaliij Square in al-Hasahisah [south of Khartoum].

He announced the establishment of three production companies to be jointly owned by workers, farmers and the administration of the Jazirah scheme on the basis of variable shares.

Al-Bashir Denounces 'Foreign Intervention' in War

*EA1812223595 Omdurman Republic of Sudan Radio
Network in Arabic 0430 GMT 18 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] The German [word indistinct] magazine yesterday interviewed the Staff Lieutenant General 'Umar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir, president of the Republic.

In the interview, the president talked about the internal situation in the country, referring to the government's response to demands of the citizens in the southern states through the application of the federal system, broadening the base of participation, sharing of power and wealth and exemption of the south from the application of the Islamic shariya laws.

His Excellency stressed that the foreign intervention in Sudanese affairs, especially from the Western countries, the United States and its support for the rebel movement, had prevented the success of the government's initiatives and efforts to bring about peace and end the war in the south.

Lieutenant General al-Bashir said that foreign intervention had taken the form of instigating the rebellion to continue war, providing it with weapons, materiel and propaganda support, attempts by neighboring states to encircle Sudan and trading of the right to self-determination to the south, which made the movement feel that its idea were correct despite consecutive military defeats in the south and despite being besieged from all directions.

Western Sahara

Polisario Said Smuggling in Algerians To Vote

LD1912134295 Rabat MAP in English
1242 GMT 19 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Rabat, Dec 19 (MAP) — The Algerian-backed guerrilla movement "Polisario [Popular Front for the Liberation of Saquia El Hamra and Rio de Oro] Front" has once again resorted to its obscure schemes to foil the planned UN-supervised referendum in the Western Sahara (a former Spanish territory recovered by Morocco in 1975), by trying to infiltrate

Algerian citizens whom they present as Saharans likely to participate in the referendum.

The move was unveiled, December 13, by a sheikh (Saharan tribe chief) who stands as Morocco's representative to the UN commission in charge of identifying eligible voters. Such a move to lead astray the international community, has been denounced by the Saharan populations who are fully aware of the "Polisario" maneuvers to distort the referendum process by resorting to all tricks to impede authentic Saharans from making their choice, that of confirming their belonging to Morocco.

Kuwait**Foreign Minister Submits Resignation to Amir****Jordanian Ties at Issue**

NC1712211995 Cairo MENA in Arabic
2055 GMT 17 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Kuwait, 17 Dec (MENA)—Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jabir, Kuwaiti first deputy prime minister and foreign minister, today presented his resignation to the amir of Kuwait. He insists on restoring Kuwait's diplomatic relations with Jordan but Shaykh Sa'd al-'Abdallah al-Salim, the heir apparent and prime minister, refuses to presently take such a step.

A MENA correspondent learned from reliable sources that the dispute between the two escalated during the cabinet meeting today. The foreign minister walked out of the meeting before its end and went to see the amir to submit his resignation.

The sources explained that attempts are now being made by a number of senior officials to persuade Shaykh Sabah to withdraw his resignation.

Shaykh Sabah stressed in a statement yesterday, Saturday [16 December], that relations with Jordan will soon be restored.

Further on Resignation

NC1812083195 Paris AFP in English
0755 GMT 18 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kuwait City, Dec 18 (AFP)—Kuwait's Foreign Minister Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah, who has clashed with the prime minister for years, announced Monday [18 December] he has handed in his resignation.

"Differences over foreign policy" prompted his resignation, Shaykh Sabah said in an interview with the Kuwaiti newspaper AL-QABAS.

"I don't think I'll reconsider my decision," he said after confirming he had handed in his resignation during a meeting of the cabinet on Sunday.

He said he was "at the disposition of the amir," Shaykh Jabir al-Ahmad al-Sabah, and the crown prince, Shaykh Sa'd al-'Abdallah al-Salim Al-Sabah, who is also the prime minister.

A government official who requested anonymity told AFP that Shaykh Sabah left the government meeting and handed in his resignation after Shaykh Sa'd criticized him for telling reporters that ties with Jordan would be normalized.

Shaykh Sabah had proposed submitting the issue to a government vote, but the prime minister decided to pass it on to the amir, cutting the conversation short and forcing the foreign minister to leave the meeting, the official said.

Diplomats here said Shaykh Sabah favors a rapprochement with countries like Jordan which were accused of supporting Iraq after the 1990 invasion of Kuwait, while the prime minister remains strongly opposed.

Meets Amir, To Continue Duties

LD1812142695 Kuwait KUNA in Arabic
1325 GMT 18 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Kuwait, 18 Dec — Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah, Kuwaiti first deputy prime minister and foreign minister, affirmed here today that he will continue in his job complying with a gracious order from Shaykh Jabir al-Ahmad al-Sabah, amir of the State of Kuwait. Local papers had published reports today confirming the submission by Shaykh Sabah of his resignation from his post because of a difference in views over foreign policy issues at the cabinet meeting held yesterday.

Replying to a question posed by KUNA about the press reports about his resignation, Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmad said: "I explained in my statement yesterday about the resignation that I would be putting at the disposal of his highness the amir and his highness the heir apparent."

He added that he met today with the amir of the State of Kuwait, listened to his sound directives, "and according to his highness' gracious order it gives me pride and honor to continue my duties in the service of my dear country and honorable sons."

Earlier today the daily AL-QABAS published a telephone conversation which its editor-in-chief Muhammad al-Saqar made yesterday with Shaykh Sabah about the question of resignation. Shaykh Sabah affirmed, according to the daily, that he would submit the resignation, saying that talking about the resignation "has a lot of truth in it. However, I hope it will not be interpreted as a family dispute."

Shaykh Sabah explained that the difference was due to "different views in foreign policy and I have every appreciation, respect, and gratitude for his highness the heir apparent and prime minister...and I consider myself as part of this regime."

Diplomatic Ties Established With Guatemala

*LD1712111695 Kuwait KUNA in Arabic
2027 GMT 12 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] United Nations, 12 Dec — The Kuwaiti mission to the United Nations announced that the state of Kuwait and the Republic of Guatemala today signed a joint statement establishing diplomatic relations between them. [passage omitted]

Qatar

Palestinian Leader 'Arafat on Official Visit

Meets Shaykh Hamad

*JN1812194795 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic
1900 GMT 18 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] President Yasir 'Arafat expressed his pride in fraternal relations of cooperation between the Palestinian and Qatari peoples. He stressed his determination and that of Shaykh Hamad Bin-Khalifah to promote these relations. This came at a news conference President 'Arafat held in Doha following talks with Qatari Amir Shaykh Hamad Bin-Khalifah.

President 'Arafat arrived in Doha today, where he was accorded an official reception. He also reviewed the guard of honor with Shaykh Hamad. A band played the Palestinian and Qatari national anthems. The Qatari amir also hosted a dinner banquet in honor of President 'Arafat. Many Qatari officials and Arab and foreign ambassadors to Qatar attended the banquet.

His excellency received Palestinian businessmen, and discussed with them a number of projects related to the Palestinian infrastructure.

President 'Arafat had a telephone call with Yemeni President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih from Doha today to learn about the latest developments in Yemen in the wake of the Eritrean aggression against the Yemeni al-Hanish al-Kabir Island in the Red Sea.

'Arafat is expected to leave for the United Arab Emirates.

Amir, 'Arafat Discuss Ties

*JN1912115695 Manama WAKH in Arabic
1045 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] Doha, 19 Dec (WAKH)—An official round of talks was held here this morning between His Highness Shaykh Hamad Bin-Khalifah Al Thani, and Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat.

The QATARI NEWS AGENCY said talks dealt with the future of bilateral relations through coordination, contacts, and steps to develop these relations especially

in the political, economic, commercial, educational, and youth sectors. Talks also dealt with developments of the Middle East peace process, particularly the Palestinian deployment and the Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank cities and areas.

The Qatari and Palestinian sides emphasized the need to reach a lasting and comprehensive solution to the Middle East crisis on the basis of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and the land-for-peace formula, and the unconditional Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories and the establishment of the independent Palestinian state whose capital is holy Jerusalem. They also called for supporting the full and inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people.

The two sides also discussed the peace process and stressed that this process should move forward on all tracks, especially the Syrian and Lebanese tracks, in a manner that secures for the Arab countries and peoples all their rights.

Leaders Agree on Joint Committee

*JN1912160995 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic
1400 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] On the second day of his official visit to Qatar, Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat this morning held a second session of talks lasting two hours with His Highness Shaykh Hamad Bin-Khalifah Al Thani, amir of Qatar. [passage omitted]

The two sides agreed to set up a joint cooperation committee to follow up on consolidating bilateral relations in the economic and cultural fields.

'Arafat Leaves Doha

*JN2012091795 Manama WAKH in Arabic
0810 GMT 20 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] Doha, 20 Dec (WAKH) — Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat left Doha today following a three-day official visit to Qatar.

The Palestinian president held talks with Amir of Qatar Shaykh Hamad Bin-Khalifah Al Thani, who bade him farewell, on bilateral relations, the Middle East peace process, and issues of common concern.

Foreign Minister Discusses Visit to Yemen

*JN1912220095 Doha Radio Qatar in Arabic
2100 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] His Excellency 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih, president of the sisterly Republic of Yemen, received a message from his brother His Highness Shaykh Hamad Bin-Khalifah Al Thani, the beloved amir

of the country, on the existing relations between the two sisterly countries and ways to strengthen and develop them, in addition to the latest developments regarding Eritrea's occupation of the Yemeni island of al-Hanish al-Kabir. His Excellency Foreign Minister Shaykh Hamad Bin-Jasim Bin-Jabr Al Thani conveyed the message to the Yemeni President. The foreign minister returned home tonight.

His excellency the foreign minister said in a pre-departure statement in Sanaa that his visit came at the instructions of the beloved amir to get acquainted with the latest developments regarding the Eritrean forces' occupation of the Yemeni islands [as heard], as well as to study fraternal relations between the two sisterly countries.

On the issue of the islands, his excellency the foreign minister praised Yemen's stand which calls for resolving this problem peacefully and expressed hope that such a solution will be reached and that things will return to normal. The foreign minister reiterated Qatar's support for Yemen.

Asked if there are Qatari diplomatic efforts to contain the crisis between Yemen and Eritrea, the foreign minister said: The State of Qatar is always ready to embark on efforts to ease any crisis in any sisterly Arab country. He added that Qatar is studying the developments with Yemen and the ways to embark on such efforts if there is a need for this. The foreign minister expressed, at the same time, the hope that the issue of the islands will be resolved through bilateral talks between Yemen and Eritrea.

Answering a question on the developments in the issue of the secretary general of the Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC], the foreign minister announced that he will visit Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Kuwait at the beginning of next week to brief the officials in these countries on Qatar's viewpoint regarding this issue. His excellency reiterated Qatar's adherence to the GCC, noting the instructions of the amir in this respect.

The foreign minister expressed Qatar's hope that this issue will be resolved amicably or legally in a way that will preserve the GCC's entity and march. He stressed Qatar's concern about this march and its belief in continuing this march. [passage omitted]

Saudi Arabia

Prince Sultan Denies Border Differences With Yemen

LD1612212495 Riyadh SPA in Arabic
1925 GMT 16 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Riyadh, 16 Dec (SPA) — His Royal Highness Prince Sultan Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, second deputy prime minister, defense and aviation minister, and inspector general, has said that the joint higher Saudi-Yemeni committee was established in order to follow up the work of the other committees, and to overcome any difficulties that might face them.

In a press statement after a dinner banquet he held today in honor of His Excellency Shaykh 'Abdallah Bin-Husayn al-Ahmar, speaker of the Yemeni parliament, and the delegation accompanying him, his highness added: "There was follow-up from the other committees, where the creation over the coming months of a number of committees for the higher committee was agreed on."

In reply to a question on differences over the demarcation of border posts, His Highness Prince Sultan Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz denied that such differences exist. He said: "Everything is proceeding well for the benefit of the two sides."

For his part, his excellency the speaker of the Yemeni parliament, who leads the Yemeni side in the committee, said: "The meeting of the higher committee is taking place at a previously specified time. This session, preparations for which were made days ago, is the committee's first meeting and is absolutely not for any extraordinary reason."

Asked about the obstacles facing the specialized committees, his excellency said: "There are no obstacles worth mentioning. It is the task of the higher committee to overcome any difficulties, and assess the progress achieved by the other committees."

He added that of all the committees that achieved progress, the committee for the border and restoration of border posts was the one that made the greatest progress in its work.

Concerning the existence of differences between the tribes, his excellency said: "Differences among tribes in the desert do not affect anything."

Foreign Minister Meets Yemeni Counterpart

LD1712163195 Riyadh Saudi Arabian Kingdom Radio Network in Arabic 1430 GMT 17 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] His Royal Highness Prince Sa'ud al-Faysal, foreign minister, this morning received

His Excellency Dr. 'Abd-al-Karim al-Iryani, deputy prime minister and foreign minister of the Republic of Yemen, at his office. They discussed ways of strengthening cooperation between the two countries. [passage omitted]

Minister Rejects Link Between Islam, Terrorism

LD1712000995 Riyadh SPA in Arabic
2252 GMT 16 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Riyadh, 16 Dec (SPA) — His Royal Highness Prince Nayif Bin 'Abd al-'Aziz, the interior minister, said that he and His Excellency Giovanni Rinaldo Coronas, Italian interior minister, signed a security agreement this evening between the Saudi Arabian and Italian Interior Ministries. [passage omitted]

Asked about the linking of terrorism and Islam, and his highness's idea of the strategy for correcting this conception and acquitting Islam of this accusation, he said: "This is in fact what I have pointed out to his excellency the Italian minister this evening. Due to its Islamic belief, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia naturally rejects terrorism, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia — faith, people, leadership, and government — refuses to allow Saudi Arabia to be a headquarters and passageway for terrorism." [passage omitted]

In reply to a question on the possibility of this agreement serving the security purposes between the European countries and the Arab world, his highness said: "Each one of us has relations with the countries of the world. No doubt our position here is strategic, and we have great responsibility in this respect. We shall carry out what is required of us for the good of the security of our country and the safety of our citizens, particularly youth in relation to drugs." [passage omitted]

In a similar statement to journalists, his excellency the Italian interior minister explained that the security agreement between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Italy which was signed today is based on cooperation between the two countries in the security field. [passage omitted]

He described the relations between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Italy as relations of friendship and mutual respect. [passage omitted]

He added: "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as I have told His Highness Prince Nayif, is the first country I wanted to visit to sign the first agreement I have signed personally outside Italy, because I am aware of the importance of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, not only in the Middle East but also in the Mediterranean region."

FBI Said Excluding Saudis From Riyadh Blast Probe

MM2012125095 London AL-SHAR'IYAH in Arabic
Dec 95 p 5

[Unattributed report: "U.S. Investigators Refuse To Coordinate With Saudis"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The Committee [for the Defense of Legitimate Rights] has learned from private sources that the FBI has refused to allow the Saudis to participate or coordinate in the investigation being conducted to determine who was behind the Riyadh explosion. The FBI has decided not to supply the Saudi authorities with any information about the course of its investigation. The Americans have also decided to limit the Saudis' role to arresting the people identified by the FBI or to provide the FBI with the required material and information. And the Americans have told the Saudis that they will receive the results of the investigation after they have been announced through the media services.

United Arab Emirates

Yasir 'Arafat Arrives on Official Visit

JN2012100895 Manama WAKH in Arabic
0840 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Abu Dhabi, 20 Dec (WAKH) — Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat arrived in Abu Dhabi this morning on an official visit to the United Arab Emirates [UAE] within his tour of a number of countries in the region.

The Palestinian president was received by UAE President His Highness Shaykh Zayid Bin-Sultan Al Nahayyan and ranking UAE officials.

'Arafat will hold talks with His Highness Shaykh Zayid dealing with the Middle East peace process developments.

Yemen

Al-Iryani on Saudi Border Talks, Eritrea

JN1912184295 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1700 GMT 19 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Brother Dr. 'Abd-al-Karim al-Iryani, deputy prime minister and foreign minister, said the outcome of the meetings of the higher Saudi-Yemeni joint committee is a definite and sure thing against the recurrence of any tension between the two countries. He added: A cordial agreement must be reached on all issues. He said most committees formed in accordance with the memorandum of understanding that was signed between Yemen and Saudi Arabia had finished a great

deal of their work particularly the committee charged with the task of determining precise geographical points on the al-Ta'if line, which was drawn 60 years ago. The line extends from the Red Sea coast to Jabal al-Tha'r.

Speaking to correspondents of the official media, the deputy prime minister and foreign minister said the committee will mark these locations again by using new scientific methods on the basis of the well-known geographic coordinates, pointing out that its work is proceeding in a satisfactory manner. He said the current committee, which is reviewing each side's view of the borderline, starting from Jabal al-Tha'r to the border point between the two countries. The border committee stemmed from this committee. During the meeting of the higher committee, it was decided that the border committee will meet on 28 February [word indistinct] each side the coordinates on a map that has a 1: 1 million scale. He hoped that this subject will not be discussed for a long time [words indistinct] the documents of each side and the legal aspects that determine the borderline.

Dr. al-Iryani said a compromise must be reached and [word indistinct] agreements and that thanks to the leadership of both countries, led by Lieutenant General 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih, president of the republic, and King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, custodian of the two holy mosques, a cordial solution will be reached.

Regarding the work of the military committees, the foreign minister said that several meetings were held and that it was agreed during the last meeting of the higher committee that the military forces deployed opposite each other in the region that extends from the Red Sea coast to Jabal al-Tha'r will be withdrawn from both sides to a distance that is at least 25 km. As for the border area from Jabal al-Tha'r to the border of the two countries, it was agreed that things will remain as

they are now. No side shall do anything that could lead to tension or friction. He added that a committee was formed to be responsible for these tasks. This committee is working to remove any cause for tension.

On reported tension, the deputy prime minister said such tension had not been caused by institutions or agencies of any of the two countries. No institution has sought to create tension, but this happens by some tribes and persons. He added that such incidents must be given their true size, especially since such things happen between the opposing tribes in our Arab world. On the official level, however, the recent agreements function as a true safety valve.

On the Eritrean aggression against the Yemeni islands, Dr. al-Iryani reviewed Yemeni-Eritrean relations. He said Eritrea is a newly independent state. Yemen played a positive role in enabling Eritrea to achieve its independence. He said that when the State of Eritrea was established, it produced official maps. It was clear on these maps that Eritrea does not covet any Yemeni islands, especially al-Hanish al-Kabir and al-Hanish al-Saghir. This continued to be the situation since the reign of Haile Selassie.

Qatari Foreign Minister Ends Visit

JN2012070295 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0430 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Shaykh Hamad Bin-Jasim Bin-Jabr Al Thani, envoy of Amir of Qatar Shaykh Hamad Bin-Khalifah Al Thani, left Sanaa for Doha last night following a brief visit to our country during which he met with Lieutenant General 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih, president of the republic. [passage omitted]

Effects of Embargo on Media Viewed
JN1912125295 Baghdad INA in Arabic
0830 GMT 19 Dec 95

[Report by Hamid 'Ali Musa]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Baghdad, 19 Dec (INA) — The blockade imposed on Iraq has blocked the implementation of the most extensive plan by the Ministry of Culture and Information to print the writings and intellectual works of the Arab writers and poets who won the Saddam Prize for Arts.

A source at the ministry told INA that preparations for the implementation of this plan were completed in 1989, and that the plan was designed to cover wide areas of different literary activities and to provide bibliographies of the winning authors and writers. However, the plan was suspended because of the scarcity of paper and the unavailability of ink, printing equipment, and spare parts for offset machines. Iraq has been banned from importing such materials since 1990. [passage omitted]

The continued blockade has also cast dark shadows on the media, press, and cultural facilities in Iraq. INA Director General 'Udayy al-Ta'i says that the information, news, and international reports received by INA are scarce and irregular because the agency can no longer receive the news bulletins of most Arab and international networks and news agencies that Iraq used to receive until 1990.

He added that the continued blockade has also resulted in reducing the scope of INA coverage, because of the closure of some of its bureaus which used to cover the most important areas of the world, and the cuts that affected their cadres and the number of employees and who used to run the bureaus' various facilities. [passage omitted]

The number of issues and pages that used to be printed by local papers has also been reduced and the size of printed letters has become smaller and hard to read. The acute shortage of paper, ink, and spare parts forced dailies to suspend publication for one day every week.

A number of chief editors told INA that their papers are suffering from an acute shortage of paper and printing requirements. Salah al-Mukhtar, AL-JUMHURIYAH chief editor, says that the paper used to print 300,000 to 400,000 issues before the blockade. Only 15,000 eight-page issues in tabloid form are now published.

He said that the paper halted publication of five weekly supplements on medicine and sciences, women and youth, technology, sports, and the family, which used to be printed in 60 colored pages.

The chief editors said that most Iraqi papers have been banned from acquiring information, publications, and subscriptions to Arab and world magazines and periodicals. They have also been banned from receiving world news networks and from attending most press conferences on hot events.

The UN Charter and international conventions and legislations emphasize that denying the individual from acquiring culture and reducing his access to papers, publications, and information is considered a flagrant violation of human rights and right to life.

Taha al-Basri, chief editor of the widely-circulated AL-THAWRAH newspaper, says that 15,000 to 16,000 issues of the paper are now printed as an eight-page tabloid while in 1990, 350,000 issues of the paper used to be printed in eight broadsheet pages.

AL-'IRAQ newspaper Chief Editor Nasrallah al-Dawudi says his newspaper, which used to print 75,000 16-page broadsheet issues in 1990, in addition to 12,000 16-page broadsheet weekly supplement in Kurdish and 15,000 issues of the weekly sports supplement now prints approximately 12,000 issues as an eight-page tabloid, 3,000 issues of the weekly supplement in Kurdish, and has suspended the weekly sports supplement.

The printing of sports and youth magazines has also reached the lowest levels, and popular organizations suspended their publications in view of the shortage of paper, ink, and other printing material. 'ALIF BA' weekly magazine, which used to print 170,000 80-page issues has now reduced them to 30,000 48-page issues.

A report by the Ministry of Culture and Information says that 1 million issues of the daily newspapers are needed to meet the needs of readers in and outside Iraq while, in the best of cases, a total of no more than 150,000 issues are now being printed. [passage omitted]

Paper Denounces Eritrean 'Aggression' Against Yemen

JN2012123595 Baghdad INA in Arabic
0730 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 20 Dec (INA)— The newspaper AL-THAWRAH has urged the Asmara government to withdraw its troops from the Yemeni island, immediately return all Yemeni prisoners, and start diplomatic negotiations with Sanaa to resolve the fabricated crisis between the two neighboring countries.

In an article today, the paper, which speaks for the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party, hopes that the Asmara government will resort to peaceful means and deny the enemies

another opportunity to harm the Arab nation. The paper notes that the Eritrean aggression and conduct provide signals of an evil scheme against Yemen. This scheme, the paper maintains, is supported by certain forces which had a hand in the 30-state aggression against Iraq and which are now conspiring against Sudan and Algeria.

The paper recalls the official and popular Arab support for the Eritrean revolution which went beyond the political, financial, and media support to military support and direct participation by Arab volunteers in the battles fought by the Eritrean revolution factions against the Ethiopian colonialists.

The paper wonders if the Eritrean aggression against Yemen is part of the Zionist scheme to obtain a foothold in Bab el-Mandeb and impose control on the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, both commercially and militarily. The paper notes reports which said that Zionist experts have built and are equipping and supplying the Eritrean army.

The paper adds: A newly independent state such as Eritrea should strengthen its ties with its Arab neighbors first because this independence came as a result of a protracted struggle fought by the brothers in Eritrea with Arab official and popular support for the Eritrean revolution.

AL-THAWRAH reaffirms its denunciation and criticism of the excuses used by Eritrea to justify its troops' treacherous aggression in the Yemeni island of Hanish al-Kabir which left several people dead or wounded from both sides. It also denounces the Eritrean troops' arrest of over 100 Yemeni citizens in the occupied island.

AL-THAWRAH warns the Asmara government against continuing its hostile scheme, which serves the Zionist attempt to sabotage the inter-Arab relations. It notes that the Eritrean aggression and Asmara government's conduct are both worrying and astonishing. They signal an evil scheme against Yemen, hatched by the same forces that are conspiring against other Arab states.

Minister on 'Dual Containment,' Regional Ties
TA1912184395 Gaza AL-HAYAH AL-JADIDAH
in Arabic 16 Dec 95 p 9

[Interview with Information Minister Hamid Yusuf Hammadi by Sanan Shaqdihi at Hammadi's office in Baghdad; date not given]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] [Shaqdihi] In the wake of the Jordanian political opening toward the Gulf states, how do you assess Iraqi-Jordanian relations?

[Hammadi] We believe that relations are normal and natural and we would like them to remain so. We are aware of the pressure that is being exerted on Jordan, but we have not and will not harm those relations. [passage omitted]

[Shaqdihi] In light of the "dual containment" policy which the United States is pursuing against both Iraq and Iran, do you not see a need to normalize relations with Tehran?

[Hammadi] The dual containment policy being promoted by the U.S. ambassador in Israel reflects a discrediting of nations and deals with them as if they were herds of sheep. This is the announced U.S. policy, but it is actually worthless.

We are endeavoring to normalize relations with Iran, and we have taken steps in this direction. We are awaiting Foreign Minister Velayati's visit to Iraq, but normalization of relations hinges on on several issues. The most important one is the repatriation of Iraqi prisoners, whose numbers are estimated at 20,000 by the Red Cross. We know who those prisoners are because they correspond with their families in Iraq. We also agreed with the Iranians before the aggression that Iraqi aircraft would be sheltered in Iran. We dispatched 142 planes, of which 26 were civilian and the rest military aircraft. At first they claimed that they had not received any aircraft and later they said they received 22 planes. This is official and it is corroborated by our records. We asked them: Won't you return the planes? They answered that they are committed to international legitimacy's resolutions. We told them that Islam stipulates that anything given for safekeeping must be returned to its owners. Do you accept the Security Council's decree and reject Islam's decree? Clearly, despite their awareness of the dual containment policy, and despite their awareness that solidarity with Iraq gives them power to confront the great Satan, it seems that there are small Satans who are preventing rapprochement with Iraq. Yet, our patience is unlimited.

[Shaqdihi] Kuwait claims that you are holding a number of Kuwaiti prisoners in Iraq. If this is true, why don't release them?

[Hammadi] The issue is not one of Kuwaiti prisoners. There are missing people in this war — this is the case in any war. We have 70,000 people missing in the war, and the Americans, too, are still looking for 2,000 soldiers who disappeared in Vietnam. During the last war there were 650,000 U.S. soldiers and 550,000 Iraqi soldiers and thousands of aircraft, so how is it possible that there would be no people missing?

In the past the Kuwaitis claimed that the number of prisoners was 11,800. Then they said that there were only 602 prisoners. During the war we captured the Kuwaiti Army General Staff, 19 amirs, and three quarters of the Kuwaiti Army. Did we release all of them and keep only 602 prisoners? Are they, for example, nuclear scientists? They requested that we publish their names in Iraqi newspapers. We did so. They claimed that some of those prisoners were being held in Iraqi jails. We agreed for them to send a committee to look for them. King Hasan II of Morocco suggested the establishment of an Iraqi-Moroccan-Gulf committee, but they rejected this proposal. We asked that an unofficial popular committee be formed, but they turned down this proposal as well. We want to cooperate with them in order to close this file, but they want to use it for political and propaganda purposes.

[Shaqdih] The news media have spoken about rapprochement between the Iraqi leadership and the Kurds in the north. Where has this rapprochement gone?

[Hammadi] Following the cease-fire, negotiations were held in order to develop autonomy in the Kurdish region. We reached agreement with them to develop autonomy, permit them to publish newspapers, and grant them the right to participate in the country's administration. We were on the verge of a signing, but the U.S. Administration summoned the Kurdish leaders to Washington and prevented them from signing the agreement under the pretext that this would enhance Saddam Husayn's status.

After they were prevented from signing the agreement, the so-called safe haven turned into the most dangerous haven in the history of the Kurds. Currently, if we were to compare any town in the north with any Iraqi town, we would find that stability in Iraqi towns is much greater than in the north. Moreover, the suffering in

Iraqi towns from the blockade is much less than in the north.

The Iraqi Kurd is killing his Turkish Kurd brother and the Turkish Army is killing both of them. Furthermore, looting and killing have increased, and unemployment and disease, which we had eliminated 25 years ago, have spread.

We expressed our readiness to engage in dialogue. They are ready for this. They are seeking dialogue, rapprochement, and the restoration of Iraqi authority to the north, but the U.S. administration is preventing them from this and is exploiting them as a card to continue striking at Iraq. [passage omitted]

Saddam Receives Libyan Communications Minister
*JN1912191095 Baghdad Iraq Television Network
in Arabic 1800 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[Announcer-read report over video]

[FBIS Translated Text] President leader Saddam Husayn, may God preserve him, received Engineer 'Izz-al-Din al-Hanshiri, secretary of the General People's Committee for Communications and Transportation of the fraternal Libyan Jamahiriyyah.

During the meeting, al-Hanshiri conveyed a verbal message to the leader president, may God preserve him, from his brother Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi, leader of the 1 September revolution. The message contains greetings from the fraternal Libyan leadership and people to President Saddam Husayn and the Iraqi people. It also stresses the Libyan people's support for the Iraqi people against the colonialist scheme. The meeting was attended by Ahmad Murtada, minister of transportation and communications.

Peres Briefs Ministers on Preparations for Talks*TA2012092595 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew
0900 GMT 20 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] Prime Minister Shim'on Peres this morning reported to the cabinet ministers' political forum on the preparations for the resumption of negotiations with Syria in Washington in a week. Our political correspondent Shlomo Raz reports that the ministers were told that the second round of talks, which was due to start in two weeks, has been brought forward by several days with the aim of keeping up momentum in the talks.

Peres Denies Giving Timeframe of Months on Golan*TA2012120495 Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew
1100 GMT 20 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] Today Shim'on Peres once again denied that he is willing for Israel to withdraw from the Golan Heights in a timeframe of several months only after signing the agreement with Syria, rather than over a period of several years. Our political correspondent Udi Segal reports on the ministerial consultation held in anticipation of the resumption of Israeli-Syrian talks:

[Begin Segal recording] This morning's session was devoted to Prime Minister Shim'on Peres' briefing to the ministers in anticipation of the resumption of the talks in Washington next Wednesday [27 December]. Shim'on Peres mainly briefed the ministers about the technical details of the talks. The Israeli team for the first round of talks will include talks coordinator Uri Savir and Ambassador Itamar Rabinovich. This round will deal with the procedural aspects of the negotiations. Peres hopes this round of talks will end with an agreement to expand the talks and include in the team more persons, such as Major General 'Uzi Dayan and Foreign Ministry Legal Adviser Yo'el Singer, as well as with the establishment of committees which will simultaneously deal with the various issues related to the peace agreement with Syria.

Peres related that the second round of talks with Syria in Washington has been brought forward by several days, from 7 January to 3 January. Uri Savir explained that this was done, among other reasons, in order not to harm the donor countries convention, which is slated to be held in Paris on 9 January.

Peres again denied having said that the withdrawal from the Golan Heights will be carried over a period of months rather than years — as claimed by Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar'.

Peres and the other ministers expressed satisfaction with Syrian activity aimed at calming the situation in south Lebanon.

Peres also announced that the ministerial team will meet again between the first and second rounds of talks with Syria, at which time Ministers Liba'i, Baraq, Ramon, Shahal, Sarid, Shohat, and Beilin will deal with more substantive issues.

Incidentally, Peres plans to appoint the inner cabinet within a week or two. The political ministerial team is not aimed at replacing the inner cabinet. So far Peres has delayed its appointment, however, because of leaks from a ministerial session held when he was still acting prime minister. [end recording]

Further on Denial*TA1912183095 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew
1700 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] The Prime Minister's Bureau has categorically denied Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar's remarks saying Prime Minister Shim'on Peres told the Americans that Israel is prepared to withdraw from the Golan within months rather than years. This was reported by our political correspondent Shlomo Raz.

Nevertheless, sources in Jerusalem noted their satisfaction at Minister al-Shar's remarks that Syria wants the violence in south Lebanon to end.

Sne Vows To Abide by 3 Principles in Syria Talks*TA1912163295 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English
1500 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Settlers from the Golan Heights today met Health Minister Efrayim Sne to discuss the situation emerging as Israel restarts negotiations with Syria.

The settlers, who intend to meet all cabinet ministers, expressed their protest and fears and said afterwards that Sne promised to abide by three principles during the negotiations. These were: a demand for a defensible border with Syria, full normalization similar to the situation with Jordan, and the retention of water resources under Israeli control.

The settlers committee reminded Sne of his promise a year ago that at least one third of the Golan Heights would remain in Israel's hands in the framework of an agreement with Israel.

'Official': '67 Border 'Under No Circumstances'

TA2012103495 Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST
in English 20 Dec 95 pp 1, 2

[Report by David Makovsky]

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Israel is ultimately prepared to compromise or even yield on its insistence that only Israel man early warning stations on the Golan as part of a final deal with Syria, a knowledgeable senior Israeli official indicated yesterday.

At the same time, he made clear that under no circumstances whatsoever can Israel agree to Damascus's insistence that Israel return to the June 4, 1967, border which brought Syria within meters of the Kinneret.

"Yes we can be less insistent when it comes to early warning, which we are currently insisting upon. But I don't know anybody who can agree to bringing the Syrians to the June 4 lines. This is unacceptable," the official said.

The official refused to divulge what the compromise on early warning might be, but it appears that it would involve the US manning the key Mount Hermon station.

Willingness to compromise on early warning appears to be the latest example of Israeli flexibility or planned concessions when it comes to the Golan, while Damascus has refused to budge on any issue related to the negotiations. Talks are due to resume next Wednesday [27 December] in the Washington area after a six-month hiatus. [passage omitted]

Finally, it has been learned that Peres is weighing shortening the duration of Israel's withdrawal from the Golan from the four-year period favored by Rabin. But again, Syria has not offered any corresponding flexibility on either the depth of withdrawal required, or on its willingness to enable Jewish settlers to remain under its authority on a Syrian-dominated Golan. [passage omitted]

The issue of data transfer is particularly acute for Israel, which wants to obtain intelligence data in real-time automatically, to guard against a surprise Syrian attack without being dependent upon the US to deliver such data at its leisure.

The scenario being envisioned would have US officials actually manning the Golan early-warning station, but transferring data to Israel either on a nearby hilltop inside Israel's new borders, or military headquarters in Tel Aviv.

Sources say the transfer of data from one ground station to the next could occur by a variety of means, including Israel directing automated cameras from afar by use of

Elber optic cables. Israel would also obtain a variety of non-visual data by wireless radio- communication, signals bounced-off satellite dishes, and use of tethered balloons. "All these seem very feasible when it comes to the Golan," a Washington-based US official said. [passage omitted]

However, sources in Israel make the point that the issue of early warning cannot be seen in isolation during the negotiations, as Al- Asad seems intent upon doing.

Specifically, the significance of early warning compromises can be best evaluated only after there is agreement between both countries upon scope and location of Syrian offensive weaponry inside Syria. [passage omitted]

'Senior' Syrian Source on Golan, Trust in Peres

TA1912100095 Tel Aviv MA'ARIV in Hebrew
19 Dec 95 p 14

[Report by Paris-based correspondent Mordekhai Haimovich]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] "Syria takes a positive view of the Israeli declarations that have been relayed to it," MA'ARIV was told yesterday by a senior member of Syrian Vice President 'Abd-al-Halim Khaddam's entourage, which arrived in Paris last night.

The source stated that one of the recent declarations of which Syria has been apprised speaks of comprehensive withdrawal from the Golan, and that he felt Peres was willing to discuss everything, including security measures.

He added that Syria does not believe early warning stations on the Golan are necessary, and it does not demand such stations in the Galilee. "If we are going to be good neighbors, we had better trust each other; and if monitoring is needed, there are enough measures, including espionage satellites."

Referring to mutual trust, the senior official explained that "Syria trusts Peres because he is a man of honor and an experienced statesman," adding that Rabin's assassination deeply touched President al-Asad. [passage omitted]

Syrian Announcement on 'Quiet' in Lebanon Doubted

TA2012080895 Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew
0500 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The security establishment has doubts about the Syrian announcement about the need for quiet in south Lebanon, and noted that there is still no proof on the ground to back such a Syrian

position. Our army affairs correspondent Avi Lipschitz reports:

An SLA [South Lebanese Army] soldier was wounded yesterday when a roadside bomb exploded. On the night of 18 December, an IDF [Israel Defense Forces] soldier was wounded when his outpost was shelled. In the last few days, the exchange of fire in south Lebanon has been at the normal level or even higher. Security sources say that since Warren Christopher's visit to Damascus and Jerusalem over the weekend, no drop in tension in the guerrilla war in Lebanon has been felt. The pendulum in the north swings back and forth all the time, with new peaks in tension from time to time. There was the wide-scale katyusha shelling last month and the clash in which an IDF soldier and three terrorists were killed two and a half weeks ago. Following such events, warnings are issued by Israeli spokesmen like that made by Major General 'Amiram Levin, commander of the Northern Command, after the katyusha shelling. [passage omitted]

In the meantime, Israeli activity in Lebanon continues to be based on pinpointed and painful actions against Hizballah activists and targets.

The new Syrian proposals, the defense establishment says, will have to be felt on the ground — which is not the case at present — and over time. Security sources also express doubt about Syria's ability to control totally the activities of the Shiite organizations, Hizballah, as well as Amal, which has stepped up its activities against Israel recently. The sources said it is doubtful whether local activists of the terrorist organizations will always heed the instructions of Damascus, which will want to assure general quiet in the north and not only to cut off supply lines to the terrorists.

Police Arrest 4 for Illegal PA Activities

TA2012101995 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew
1000 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Jerusalem police this morning arrested four East Jerusalem Palestinian residents suspected of illegal activities on behalf of the Palestinian Authority [PA]. The four work for the Jerusalem Center for Academic Vocational Studies, which is suspected of being operated and funded by the PA. They were detained after failing to show up for questioning last week.

Settlers Paper Calls For Direct Dialogue With PA TA2012092795 'Ofra NEQUDA in Hebrew Dec 95 p 5

["Opening Page" column by editor-in-chief Uri Elitzur:
"To Speak to Them"]

[FBIS Translated Text] It is a different reality altogether. The withdrawal has already taken place, the Palestinian army is on our doorsteps, and the Palestinian Authority [PA] is a fact. Thanks to Yig'al 'Amir's good deeds it all happened in a flash and in absolute quiet, leaving us no time to protest, cry, or grieve. The question now is not whether this is good or bad, but how to live with it. We will live with it far worse the more time we take digesting it; and we will lose the next battles the more we insist on going on fighting the old wars.

We resemble a family which very vehemently cautioned their daughter not to marry her unsuccessful choice of a husband. We explained to her how miserable her life with him would be, we warned her that she would yet be a battered wife.

Now that the wedding is over, do we wish upon our daughter that our prophecies prove wrong and that somehow everything will turn out just fine; do we wish upon ourselves that her life really will be miserable, so that we can smugly tell her: We told you so?

And how do we treat the bridegroom now? Do we continue to boycott him and refuse to acknowledge his existence, or do we find some human way of respecting and suspecting him at the same time? We have brand-new neighbors, and I propose that we speak to them, directly rather than through the IDF [Israel Defense Forces]. Given the new reality the opposite would be more apt, that the IDF speak to them through us. We are their neighbors, and it is clear at this point that we — not the IDF — are the stable and local Israeli factor. We have thousands of issues to settle with our new neighbors, and I propose that we start discussing them at once: Heads of settlements with heads of neighboring villages, a council head with his counterpart on the other side of the nonexistent border, and the Council of Jewish Settlements in Judaea, Samaria, and Gaza with the PA.

I propose that we travel frequently between the villages and in the cities, without the IDF's protection (what can one do) and under the responsibility of the Palestinian army (that's the situation). We have not left the country.

The previous battle is over. It did not end the way we wanted it to, but we now have to face the next test. After all, we continue to build, settle, and make progress. In order for this enterprise to succeed we must adapt to

the new conditions soon, rather than try to proceed in an imaginary reality that no longer exists.

Settlement Leaders React to Proposal

TA2012095295 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew
15 Dec 95 p A4

[Report by Nadav Shragay]

[FBIS Translated Text] NEQUDA's editorial calling on the Council of Jewish Settlements in Judaea, Samaria, and Gaza to enter a dialogue with the Palestinian Authority [PA] has triggered a storm among Jewish settlers.

The council issued an official communique saying it opposes contacts with the PA, which it described as "a terror organization calling for the transfer of Jews, some of whose members encourage murderous terror against Israeli citizens."

"The kind of dialogue suggested by NEQUDA editor Uri Elitzur ignores the Oslo accords, whose meaning is that the Jewish settlements will become ghettos and that parts of the homeland will be handed over to strangers. The Council of Jewish Settlements in Judaea, Samaria, and Gaza will continue to fight the Oslo accords," the communique asserted.

Most leaders in the territories voiced reservations about Elitzur's call. Statements in this spirit were issued by Beni Katzover of Elon More and Nisan Slomiansky, head of the Elqana council. Elyaqim Ha'etzni, a member of the Council of Jewish Settlements in Judaea, Samaria, and Gaza, issued the most stringent statement: "At best, if I wanted to defend Uri Elitzur, I would say that he has not read the Oslo agreements. At worst, my heart aches at the sight of good people collapsing under pressure. I mourn the move to the other side of a comrade in the struggle.

"It is abysmally naive in the face of the wish to oust us from Judaea, Samaria, and Gaza in the first stage, and to expel all the Jews from the country and destroy the Jewish state in the second stage.

"Elitzur's call contains Kahanist elements of separatism from the State of Israel, as well as naivete, lack of thought, insensitivity, and caving in under pressure."

Some leaders reacted differently. Shilo Gal, head of the Gush 'Etyon regional council, said: "In principle I do not rule out a dialogue, but it will take some time and it will happen only after the situation in the field stabilizes. If we continue to live here, then there are daily issues that can be promoted only through cooperation. Life is stronger than politics, and the daily reality will prove whether what we have is peace or not."

Moshe Leibovitz, head of the Betar local council, said: "It is a pity that Elitzur has only now wised up. Given the new reality created three years ago, when a genuine and sincere dialogue between the Council of Jewish Settlements in Judaea, Samaria, and Gaza and the government ceased to exist, whoever failed to predict the future was simply blind. We will have no choice but to enter a direct dialogue with more or less authoritative Palestinian elements in the field as well as with PA officials.

"I thought we should have started preparing for it two years ago. We should at least have entered a dialogue with representatives in the field before the big cities were evacuated so that there would be some kind of contact or dialogue after the evacuation, even if this was based solely on interests. Today this would be done from a position of weakness."

Aharon Domb, spokesman of the Council of Jewish Settlements in Judaea, Samaria, and Gaza, said that Elitzur's suggestion deserves a serious discussion. Domb stressed that this was his personal opinion, and that he was not speaking in his capacity as spokesman.

Commenting on the reactions to his proposal, Elitzur noted yesterday: "I hear that most of my colleagues disagree with me. This is a significant fact which I am not taking lightly. At the same time, I wanted to open a dialogue and I am glad that one did. My main purpose was to rid my colleagues of their fear of the PA and the Palestinian Police, an understandable fear which we must overcome.

"If we cease traveling through areas that are not controlled by the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] we will lose them. I see the difference between Gaza and Jericho. Jews go to Jericho, while no Jew enters Gaza. I want Bethlehem to be like Jericho, not like Gaza."

Peres, Shohat Agree on Addition to Defense Budget

TA1912132995 Tel Aviv DAVAR RISHON in Hebrew
19 Dec 95 p 8

[Report by Amnon Atad]

[FBIS Translated Text] Shim'on Peres, prime minister and defense minister, and Finance Minister Avraham Shohat have reached a compromise under which the defense budget will be expanded by an additional 225 million shekels.

Over the past several weeks, the heads of the defense establishment have made new budgetary demands, reaching some 700 million shekels. Part of this sum was to pay for the REFA'EL [Armament Development Authority] recovery plan, and another part was earmarked for the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] officers' pension funds.

The Treasury was against any addition to the budget, claiming that next year's defense budget has only recently been finalized.

According to the new agreement, the defense establishment will be given a one-time additional allocation, and the sources for this money will be agreed on next month. At the same time, the Defense Ministry will slash 150 million shekels from its activity budget, so as not to make next year's deficit larger.

The two ministers also agreed that issues pertaining to ongoing working procedures between the Finance and Defense Ministries will be agreed on in the coming month.

Minister Shahal on Russian Mafia Activities

TA1912134895 Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT (24 SHA'OT supplement) in Hebrew 19 Dec 95 pp 10, 11

[Report by Gabi Brun and Doron Me'iri]

[FBIS Translated Text] Late last year one of the more prosperous Russian banks was seeking to open an overseas branch. To find an appropriate spot, the bank enlisted the services of L., an Israeli citizen who immigrated from Russia and is considered a prominent benefactor in Israel. L. received a \$60 million payment for obtaining a permit to open a bank in Cyprus.

When L. came back to his employer, the Russian bank manager, he had the desired permit. However, the permit was for a bank in the Turkish part of Cyprus — an enterprise doomed to failure. The Russian bank manager demanded that the Israeli return the money at once, but the latter firmly replied: "I don't have it."

This affair was discussed in the most senior Israeli and Russian echelons in the months just prior to Rabin's assassination. Russian Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev brought the matter up in his talks with the late prime minister, demanding that the Israeli Government assist in recovering the \$60 million. Russian Minister of Internal Affairs Viktor Yerin also sought Israeli intervention in the matter. Yet the pressure appeared to have resulted in just one thing: About two months ago, the Russian bank manager was murdered in Moscow, and judging by the information obtained by the Israel Police, the assassination had been commissioned by L., the aforementioned Israeli citizen.

Yesterday Internal Security Minister Moshe Shahal was asked to address this affair, which is just one of the dozens of cases of the Russian mafia's penetrating into Israel. Shahal settled for "no comment," but addressing the Knesset Immigrant Absorption Committee later, the minister was slightly more articulate. He said: "The international Russian mafia has gained access not only

to the Israeli economy, but also to politics and media, and the danger to the latter two is much greater than to the economy."

Assassinations are not what bothers Shahal and the government most. They are much more perturbed by the fact — also known to the Israel Police Intelligence Branch — that the Russian mafia has been attempting in recent years to take over several small and medium-sized Israeli municipal councils plagued by financial difficulties. A takeover of these local authorities may serve as a springboard for the establishment of a legitimate political party in the State of Israel.

Minister Shahal refused yesterday to name the local councils the Russian mafia has been trying or has managed "to buy," but he did disclose the following: "They come to local councils and offer to solve the councils' problems, all the time planning to get a foothold in politics. There is nothing to confine their attempts to influence political elements in a bid to exploit them at a later date. Right now they are in the initial stages of penetrating the economy, first and foremost, but also into politics and the media, in an attempt to take over establishment systems. We do have an internal security problem, but the international crime problem is as formidable. It has to be addressed immediately."

The huge volume of international Russian mafia activity in Israel can be gleaned from the official estimates of funds funneled to Israel from Russia and the Ukraine, as well as the Baltic states. According to an estimate of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs, the mafia has moved about \$4 billion to Israel over the past five years. The Israel Police Intelligence Branch's estimates are more cautious: between \$1.5 and \$2 billion.

A part of these funds, says Shahal, is earmarked for Israel, while another part is only laundered in Israel, and is subsequently moved on to some European countries. Information revealed at an Interpol convention that ended a week ago indicates that the countries most hurt by the international Russian mafia's activities are Greece, Cyprus, and Belgium. It has further been learned that the United States is worried about winning the struggle against this new kind of international crime.

Who are the mafia protagonists? Minister Shahal stressed yesterday that there is no connection between the Russian mafia in Israel and immigrants from the CIS. Some of the hundreds mafia operators in Israel are Jews who immigrated under the Law of Return, but many others came here with counterfeit documents, taking advantage of the Law of Return. Shahal said yesterday: "Anyone can procure false ID papers from the official Russian authorities for \$3,000 to \$5,000.

There is no easy way to determine whether a certain person is who he claims to be."

The mafiosi usually leave Israel a month or two after their arrival, moving their activities to other countries. Some stay here to host "conventions" occasionally held by the mafia in Israel. Minister Shahal spoke yesterday of two international conventions held by the Russian mafia in Israel — one in Elat and another in Tel Aviv. These were deluxe conventions, with limousines, ostentatious entertainment, and tight security.

The police managed to foil another convention in Israel by barring its participants from entering the country.

According to Shahal, there are about 10 Russian and Ukrainian mafia groups, some of which operate in Israel. The heads of the 10 groups, who collaborate with each others, attended the two conventions in Israel. "They feel comfortable in Israel," Shahal said. "The weather is nice, and money transfers are free."

The police are assiduously — but not always successfully — collecting intelligence data on mafia operations in Israel and other countries. The Russian mafia managed, for instance, to smuggle the bodies of two young Russian men from Israel to Russia under the nose of the police. The two arrived in Israel immediately after the assassination of popular radio broadcaster Listyev in Moscow. Shortly after arriving here, the two died in central Israel under mysterious circumstances. The official cause of death was a drug overdose, but the police suspected that they had been assassinated. The two men had apparently murdered reporter Listyev at the behest of the international Russian mafia, which had them killed as soon as their mission was accomplished. The two men's bodies were smuggled to Russia, where they were buried as John Doe's in an unspecified location.

The internal security minister did not discuss this affair yesterday, although he informed the Immigrant Absorption Committee about the Russian mafia's modus operandi, from extortion to business takeovers. "They buy companies legitimately," Shahal revealed. "We are aware of the source of the money and of the buying company's objectives.... Without flinching, they bought some real estate paying \$0.5 million more than the actual market value of about \$3 million. This purchasing of assets at much higher prices than their real value recurs in almost every Israeli city."

To prevent these and other occurrences, the Israel Police Criminal Investigation Department has established an international crime unit, and its investigators focus solely on Russian mafia activities. The police manned the unit with several dozens Russian-born investigators, who have a heavy workloads on their hands. These in-

vestigators have already exposed, among other things, a group of Israeli passport carriers operating through Hungary, which profits from excellent-quality counterfeit documents and money, drugs, prostitution, hit men, and many other activities.

To prevent the entry of mafia members into Israel, Shahal announced yesterday he would act to introduce a new entry form for persons seeking Israeli citizenship. The form will be filled in by all applicants, not merely CIS immigrants. It will carry detailed questions on matters such as a criminal record. Applicants whose answers are found to be false will be expelled.

An additional and a more effective measure against the Russian mafia is the bill to prevent money laundering, which is in the final stages of drafting and legislation. With government endorsement, the bill may be passed during the present Knesset term. Under the bill, any illegally obtained money can be confiscated, which may significantly obstruct the funneling of money from criminal sources to Israel.

Russian Espionage Activity in Israel Viewed

TA1812142595 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew
18 Dec 95 p B1

[Article by Ze'ev Schiff: "The Return of the Russian Intelligence"]

[FBIS Translated Text] It is most uncommon for two Shin Bet heads to air their professional disagreements publicly. This happened last week when, addressing the Supreme Court debate on the early release of Russian spy Marcus Klingberg, former Shin Bet head Ya'aqov Peri expressed a contradictory view to that of the current Shin Bet head. Even when he was the actual head of the Shin Bet, Peri, during a special discussion of the issue in Rabin's bureau, said that if a special agreement were signed, it would reduce the threat of Klingberg saying the wrong things if he were to be paroled early. At the time, Peri was in the minority, and Rabin accepted the recommendations of the legal and defense establishment over Peri's.

Those who are opposed to Klingberg's early release point to the need for deterrence in view of the recent increase in Russian espionage activity after a long hiatus. They view Klingberg as the spy who caused the most damage and believe others need to be deterred. They believe that the fact that Klingberg carried on his espionage activity for such a long time and worked against his fellow scientists should be taken into account. They fear that "professional political elements" might operate him indirectly and cause damage to Israel (incidentally, on a previous occasion, I wrongly wrote that Klingberg had met with the head of the KGB).

At the same time, I believe that if there is an agreement with Klingberg that will keep him away from his political "helpers," Israel can take the risk of releasing him before he completes his sentence and not treat him like the United States treats Pollard. Support for this stand can be found in the fact that Israel, at one time, was willing to release Klingberg as part of a deal in which the Russians were to free U.S. prisoners and the Americans were to pardon Pollard. This fell through when the Americans and the Russians made a deal without us. Furthermore, the Russians are not interested in Klingberg today. In any event, even if the High Court rejects his petition, the matter will be discussed by a parole board which could reduce his sentence by one-third.

On the other hand, the Russians are interested in another spy imprisoned in Israel: Gregoriy Londin [name as transliterated]. The Londin case was on the short list of issues Belarus President Alyaksandr Lukashenka prepared for discussion with the late Prime Minister Rabin. Londin was born in Minsk, the Belarus capital, but was an agent of the KGB, whose center is in Moscow. It is believed that Moscow and the organization that took over from the KGB instructed the Belarus president to ask for Londin's early release.

The Russians presented a similar request to President 'Ezer Weizman when he visited Moscow last May. Both requests were turned down. Rabin told the Belarus president that the Londin case had been discussed at every legal level and that the Supreme Court had rejected his appeal in 1992. The judges accepted the state's claim that the man had caused security damage. The parole board that discussed the question of his health last year also rejected his appeal.

Londin, an engineer by profession, was sentenced to 13 years in prison for aggravated espionage. Among other things, he provided the KGB with information on the Merkava tank. He was a veteran agent who joined the KGB in 1959. He also operated against Jewish activists. His immigration to Israel in 1973 was part of a KGB mission. For years, and until he was caught, Londin traveled to Bulgaria and Finland to meet with his handlers. Some of them are currently serving as diplomats at the Russian Embassy in Israel. They consider it important that Londin not serve his full term. They want to prove that they look after their people.

Over the past several months, it has been claimed that the scope of Russian espionage activity in Israel is expanding, which the Israeli intelligence services find quite disturbing. Russian intelligence is apparently making excessive use of the Russian Embassy in Israel compared with the activities of other embassies. Many

of their diplomats engage in intelligence gathering under various guises. The three current Russian intelligence apparatuses — SVR [Foreign Intelligence Service], which parallels the Mosad; GRU [Main Intelligence Directorate], the military intelligence; and FSB, the Federal Security Service, which was again given broad powers of enforcement in view of the rise in activity of the Russian mafia — gather intelligence in Israel. The Russians are exploiting the fact that Israel, unlike other Western countries and Russia itself, does not bar diplomats who were formerly known to be members of the intelligence community.

Why does Russian intelligence attribute such importance to Israel at a time when its stations overseas are being cut back? Israel is apparently considered an important — if not primary — Middle East target. It is viewed as a regional superpower. Russian intelligence is primarily looking for advanced industrial and military technology. The Russians also view Israel as a hub of Western economic activity. They are especially interested in nonconventional weapons. They are interested in the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] and its weapons, order of battle, and operational activities. They are even interested in political activity.

Russian intelligence finds Israel a relatively easy place to operate because of the large Russian immigrant community. This, of course, makes the life of Israeli counterespionage far less comfortable.

Court Rejects Appeal of Convicted Syrian Spy

TA1812174995 *Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew*
1700 GMT 18 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] A case of espionage for Syria was disclosed this evening in the Supreme Court in Jerusalem. The judges rejected the appeal of Qassim Muhammad Faris, whom the Nazareth District Court convicted of spying for Syrian intelligence over a year ago and sentenced to six years in prison.

The judges also rejected the appeal of Asaf Tawfiq Haydar, who was involved in the case and made a plea bargain. Our correspondent Mikha'el Tuchfeld reports that Haydar withdrew his appeal after it was made clear to him that a plea bargain cannot be appealed.

Entry of 7 American 'Extremist' Jews Banned

TA2012092695 *Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew*
0900 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Interior Minister Hayim Ramon has banned the entry into Israel of seven Jews active in extremist U.S. organizations. Our correspondent Gay Qotev reports that the minister's action is authorized by the Law of Return and the law on entry into Israel.

Israel Denies Report of Jan Visit by Crown Prince
JN1912165595 Amman JORDAN TIMES in English
19 Dec 95 pp 1, 7

[Report by P. V. Vivekanand]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Amman—Israel on Monday [18 December] denied reports that His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hasan was scheduled to visit the Jewish state next month and said that while there was a standing invitation to the Crown Prince to visit, no specifics had been finalised.

Shim'on Shamir, the Israeli ambassador to Jordan, hinted, however, that the Crown Prince could be visiting Israel after the Holy Month of Ramadan.

The ambassador also reiterated that there was no deliberate Israeli refusal to allow a group of more than 500 Jordanian personalities to visit the West Bank to participate in Palestinian celebrations marking the launch of self-rule in Nabulus. He said the group's application was submitted too late to be processed in time for the trip on Friday.

On Israeli media reports that the Crown Prince was scheduled to visit Israel in January, the ambassador said:

"There is indeed a standing invitation to the Crown Prince to visit Israel, but no specifics have been finalised. The visit would take place at the right time and (under the) right circumstances."

"Any information on topics to be discussed is also unfounded," he added.

Pressed further, the ambassador said the visit would "certainly not take place before or during Ramadan" implying that it could come after the Holy Month, which ends in late February. He declined to elaborate except that the Crown Prince would be contacting Israeli "social, economic, political and cultural institutions" whenever he chooses to make the visit.

It will be the first official visit of any member of the Royal Family to Israel. His Majesty King Husayn and Prince hasan went to Israel last month but the visits came in connection with the death of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhaq Rabin.

The King attended the assassinated prime minister's funeral in West Jerusalem on 6 November, and the Crown Prince went to Israel one day later to pay condolences to the Israeli leadership and the Rabin family.

In comments to the Jordan times on Monday, Ambassador Shamir rejected all suggestions that political considerations were behind Friday's incident at the King

Husayn bridge where Israel refused entry to the Jordanian group which wanted to visit Nabulus.

"The group was not in touch with Israeli authorities but handled the applications (for entry permit) through the Palestinian self-rule authority," he said. The Israeli authorities received the applications Thursday afternoon and "there was not enough time" to process them in time for the group's crossing to the West Bank on Friday, he said.

The information that the entry permits were not ready was broadcast on Israel Radio Thursday afternoon so that the group would not seek to travel on Friday, he said. "But they turned up at the bridge anyway on Friday, and we could not have allowed their entry without going through the right procedures," he added.

The group would have been "welcome in Israel," he said, "particularly that they wanted to celebrate" with the Palestinians the launching of autonomy in Nabulus, "which is a result of our peace agreement with the Palestinians."

The incident drew heavy anti-Israeli criticism in the Jordanian press, with newspapers carrying numerous articles and editorial comments assailing the Jewish state.

The group that was denied entry included former Prime Minister Tahir al-Masri, at least 20 members of Parliament, university presidents and professors, journalists, municipal counsellors and independent personalities.

Columnists suggested that Israel had deliberately denied entry to the group because it did not want a high-profile Jordanian visit to Nabulus or that Palestinian leader Yasir 'Arafat was somehow behind the denial because he perceived the visit as politically oriented.

Mr. al-Masri, who was one of the coordinators of the visit, said the group, many of whose members have close ties with Nabulus, had only wanted to "show the world the close relationship between Jordanians and Palestinians" by attending a celebration in the West Bank town launching Palestinian self-rule.

In general terms, Ambassador Shamir said Monday, "We recognise and respect the right of every Jordanian" to visit Israel following the signing of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty in October 1994.

But, for the moment, the embassy in Amman operating out of a handful of rooms at a hotel since December last year, cannot simply accommodate any large number of individual applicants for visas, he said.

As such, the issuance of visas is restricted to groups, where the embassy can deal with one travel agent acting

on behalf of 50 or 100 applicants, according to the ambassador.

However, individual visas are issued to certain categories of applicants such as businessmen, journalists, delegations, etc., in addition to those who apply on health grounds.

The embassy will open its door for individual applicants when it moves to a new premises in the al-Rabiah district near the embassy of the People's Republic of China in about six months' time, said the ambassador.

The mission in Amman will host the "largest Israeli consulate," the then foreign minister and now prime minister, Shim'on Peres, said in late October while he was here to attend the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) economic summit.

Israeli Envoy 'Clarifies' Stand on Property

JN1912135395 Amman JORDAN TIMES in English
19 Dec 95 pp 12, 7

[Report by JORDAN TIMES staff reporter P. V. Vivekanand]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Amman—Israel has explained to Jordan that the issue of Jordanian-owned property in the occupied territories could be discussed only in the context of the broader negotiations on the status of refugees and cannot be addressed on a bilateral level, the Israeli ambassador to Jordan said Monday.

Ambassador Shim'on Shamir also said the draft of the much-delayed transport agreement between Jordan and Israel is ready for signature, but the signing of the document is being delayed because of technical hitches in a separate but related accord on air services.

Mr. Shamir said the Jordanian government had approached the Israeli government to address the issue of property owned by Jordanians but which remain under Israeli control after the Jewish state occupied the West Bank, including Arab East Jerusalem, in the 1967 war.

The issue is an irritant for many Jordanians who argue that there is no reasons for Israel to deny the property rights of Jordanians after Jordan and Israel signed a peace treaty in October 1994.

However, Ambassador Shamir said Israel had "clarified" to the Jordanian government that its interpretation of the peace treaty in this context is that from the day the treaty was signed Jordanians were removed from the list of "citizens of enemy countries," clearing the way for them to own property in areas controlled by Israel.

"But the treaty is not retroactive," according to Israel's interpretation as explained by the ambassador. As such,

"controversial law on absentee property" applies to all Jordanian property that went under Israeli control in 1967. In practical terms, this means that the issue would have to be dealt within the framework of Israeli-Palestinian final status negotiations scheduled to begin in May 1996.

No immediate Jordanian comment was available on the Israeli "clarification."

On the status of bilateral agreements stipulated in the Oct. 26, 1994 peace treaty, Mr. Shamir said four other documents were also ready for signature, but they have to wait until after the transport accord is signed in line with the "order of signing" as stipulated in the treaty.

Mr. Shamir declined to be specific on the differences holding up the air services agreement except to say that they were "technical" and related to "airspace etc." He likewise did not provide a timeframe to the eventual signing of the accord.

According to Jordanian officials, one of the key difference is over the altitude that Israel is willing to allow Jordanian aircraft to fly at in its airspace.

The transport accord provides for the entry of Jordanian and Israeli vehicles to each others territory and would launch direct bus and taxi routes between the two countries.

Since the signing of the peace treaty more than one year ago, Jordan and Israel have signed eight agreements on cooperation (tourism, energy, agriculture, security and combating drugs, boundaries, health, the environment and trade).

In addition to the transport accord, which is seen as key to the implementation of some of the already signed agreements, there are other pending accords, on science and technology, al-'Aqabah-Elat maritime borders and telecommunications.

"These four documents are also ready for signing, which could be done in one day in a ceremony after the transport accord is signed," said Mr. Shamir.

When the five accords are signed, the total of 13 accords "will form the infrastructure for close Jordanian-Israeli interaction," said the ambassador.

Mr. Shamir, who took office in mid-1995 as Israel's first ambassador to Jordan, said he expected the second year after the signing of the peace treaty to bring about close Jordanian-Israeli cooperation.

"In the first year, we concentrated on the framework for cooperation," including the signing of the bilateral agreements and the lifting of Jordanian laws that imposed a boycott of Israel, the ambassador said. Focus

will be shifted in the second year to promote economic cooperation and business interaction between the governments as well as the private sectors of the two countries, he added.

In general, there is a continuous process of contacts between the two sides and it is continuing on various levels, the ambassador said, citing a few examples. "Today, as we speak, a team of Jordanian academics are attending a seminar at Tel Aviv Open University on satellite teaching... the joint Jordanian-Israeli committee on Jordan Rift Valley development is meeting at a kibbutz (collective farm) near the Dead Sea..." and a seminar is being held in Amman on "Smoothing the Path to Peace: Jordanian-Palestinian- Israeli relations."

In addition, he said, there are the "continued consultations" between Jordanian and Israeli businessmen on joint ventures and business opportunities and the wave of "hundreds of Israeli tourists present in Jordan every day from Petra to Umm Qays."

"These reflect the fact that there is a growing momentum in the Jordanian-Israeli relationship," he said.

Daily Censures Eritrea's 'Foolish Action'

JN2012122795 Amman AL-DUSTUR in Arabic
20 Dec 95 pp 1, 17

[Editorial: "Eritrea's Foolish Action"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The sudden Eritrean attack against the Yemeni island of al-Hanish al-Kabir is not an aggression against sisterly Yemen alone, but is also a blatant aggression against every Arab country that has stood by the Eritrean people and supported them

both materially and politically when the Eritreans were fighting the battle for independence from Ethiopia.

Perhaps it is this reason that we — both inside and outside Yemen — feel the ugliness of what Eritrea has committed against Yemen. This action constitutes deep ingratitude and even total betrayal and ugly turnabout against what we used to think was a common history and one destiny binding the Arabs with Eritrea.

We described the Eritrean aggression as sudden, because we used to believe that relations of joint struggle would stave off these domestic anti-Arab Eritrean trends and preclude this amazing Eritrean lineup with the enemies of Arabs who are well known to us as well as to the Eritrean people.

What is even more surprising is that Eritrea — which has been independent for less than three years and is not yet capable of meeting the basic needs of its poor people — has the courage, weapons, and means of fighting which enabled it to skirmish with a country like Yemen, although there is no previous tension or background that may justify such treacherous hostilities against sisterly Yemen.

We are aware that Eritrea's occupation of a Yemeni island located near Bab el Mandeb will not be the final chapter of the battle. We also know that the enemies of Arabism in Eritrea have carved a wound in their relations with the Arabs — a wound they did not need regardless of the temptations and promises of those who instigated the Eritrean Government to commit this foolish action.

Al-Shar', Buwayz View Peres' 10-Point Plan
NC1912145595 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic
1159 GMT 19 Dec 95

[News conference by Lebanese Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz and Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' with unidentified correspondents at the B'abda Presidential Palace on 19 December—recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Buwayz] There are new initiatives by Peres and the U.S. Administration. I believe it is premature to diagnose these proposals. But, as His Excellency Foreign Minister Faruq has informed us, they include some elements that need to jell before they become a practical mechanism.

[Correspondent] Minister, [words indistinct] nine points declared by Peres regarding an agreement. How serious are these points and what is your stance on them?

[Al-Shar'] There are 10 points that include ideas, opinions, and stances. They are not proposals in the true sense of the word. They relate to procedural issues, such as the mechanism of resuming the negotiations and the level of negotiations. They also relate to some issues of a substantive nature. I could say that these 10 points Secretary Christopher brought with him to Damascus and on which he briefed His Excellency President Hafiz al-Asad elicited a response and comment. Some were (?welcomed), some evoked comment, and others did not earn the required approval.

[Correspondent] What are the main features of these points?

[Al-Shar'] As I said, they are not specific points on the basis of which an agreement or not depends. They express the viewpoint of the Israeli Government, and Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres specifically, as a practical method to reach a just and comprehensive solution. It proceeds from an agreement on the Syrian-Israeli track to be followed by an agreement on the Lebanese-Israeli track, which will be followed by a comprehensive solution in the region.

[Correspondent] [Passage indistinct]

[Al-Shar'] The meeting with His Excellency President Ilyas al-Hirawi was, as usual, good and amicable. I conveyed to His Excellency a message from President Hafiz al-Asad dealing with the results of Secretary Christopher's visit to Damascus and what he briefed us on. We also discussed some issues of common interest during the meeting.

[Correspondent] [Passage indistinct]

[Al-Shar'] I have explained that the 10 points do not constitute a proposal on whether or not to reach an

agreement. They are a group of ideas, concepts, and positions, most of which, we think, are flexible.

One of these points suggests that the Israeli Government prefers a meeting on the highest possible level. The president's answer to this point was that this issue is premature. We believe that Israeli Prime Minister Peres was resilient about the form of negotiations when he left things for Syria's convenience.

We want negotiations in a particular way. He did not object to that. As you know, the negotiations will commence on 27 December near Washington in the presence of negotiators on the ambassadorial level. Two or more delegates on each of the Syrian and Israeli sides will attend. And the U.S. sponsor will attend the talks.

[Correspondent] One of the points discussed by Shim'on Peres yesterday was respect for calm on the Lebanese border. How genuine is this point and was it discussed with the Lebanese side?

[Al-Shar'] At his meeting with President Hafiz al-Asad, Secretary Christopher discussed what he heard from Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres when he met President Clinton in Washington.

We have sensed flexibility on several of these points. Some indicate that attaining the goal is more important than scrutinizing the means or procedures leading to the goal. Another important point was that the timetable should not be at the expense of reaching an agreement and a speedy and complete withdrawal. In Syria, we have always called for a speedy withdrawal without saying how many years it should take. We have spoken of months to effect the withdrawal. This is also another positive point we heard from Secretary Christopher on behalf of Israeli Prime Minister Peres.

As for calm in south Lebanon, we are against (?sabotage) in south Lebanon. Syria's stance in this regard is known. We see that what takes place in south Lebanon sometimes goes beyond the recognized border. This is because of Israeli shelling of Lebanese villages and cities and grave human losses among Lebanese civilians as well as Lebanese Resistance retaliation for this extortion by firing Katyusha rockets on northern Israel.

We do not support such escalation. We support calming things in south Lebanon. This does not negate the concept and understanding reached in the summer of 1993. That understanding stipulated that the Resistance has a legitimate right to defend its land inside Lebanese territory.

[Correspondent] [Passage indistinct]

[Al-Shar'] Such talk, which appeared in an Israeli paper, is baseless. We have deduced nothing concerning

this topic from our talks with Christopher and Dennis Ross or from any other source. Lebanese officials are conducting negotiations. Syria is not negotiating on behalf of Lebanon. This is well known to Israel, the United States, and other countries.

[Correspondent] [Passage indistinct]

[Al-Shar' in English] We hope that the peace talks between Syria and Israel, which will resume on 27 December in Washington, will produce tangible results. The atmosphere is much better than before, as we feel it, and we have been assured by a much more active American role in the peace talks, much more importance by the Americans, and that is why [there are] these two rounds of talks, one on the 27th and the other the beginning of January. And then on the 10th or around the 10th of January Secretary Christopher will come back to the region in order to [word indistinct] the whole outcome of the [word indistinct] and the talks in Washington or near Washington.

[Correspondent] [words indistinct]

[Al-Shar' in English] What I can say [is] that some of these nine points or 10 points, which were conveyed by Secretary Christopher, give more flexibility than it was in the past in order to move the peace process forward. And if there is a real movement on the Syrian track, definitely this will be followed by real movement on the Lebanese track, because [word indistinct] these two tracks are very much interlinked together.

[Correspondent] [Words indistinct]

[Al-Shar'] Naturally, the peace talks will continue as long as they stem from a clear basis, namely, international legitimacy, the UN resolutions, and the land-for-peace principle. When there are good intentions and enough seriousness by the two sides, I do not believe that any other action could affect things. But at the same time we believe that the basic objective of the Resistance is to end the occupation. If the peace process is indeed aimed at ending the occupation, only then will the Resistance have achieved its primary, rather sole, objective. Consequently, we do not feel that there is a real contradiction between the Resistance and the negotiating process.

[Correspondent] [Words indistinct] Secretary Christopher that Lebanon will resume its negotiations with Israel after 10 January?

[Al-Shar'] When Christopher comes back on or after 10 January we will summarize the results of the two brief rounds of talks that will have been held in Washington with active U.S. participation. Perhaps from this summary and from what he will hear from each side

he may embark on a shuttle trip between the two sides to accelerate the process.

[Correspondent] Minister Buwayz, what is your reaction to Peres' remark yesterday regarding calmness on the Lebanese-Israeli border? What are the (?guarantees) for this point?

[Buwayz] I believe events escalate in south Lebanon primarily because Israel occupies this territory. This occupation has generated the Resistance. The raids and aggression in the south generate the reaction. We have said from the start that the radical solution to the issue of security and stability in the south lies in activating the negotiations and in Israel showing a real desire and actual preparedness to leave all the occupied Lebanese territories. I believe that once we receive such a practical proposal and once the Syrian-Israeli security talks make substantive and significant progress, I believe this issue could be resolved substantively.

[Correspondent] Minister, could this point serve as a basis for reviving the Lebanese-Israeli negotiations?

[Buwayz] I believe that reviving the Lebanese-Israeli negotiations requires three points. First there should be an invitation by the U.S. sponsor; second there should be positive and practical Israeli proposals, and by this I do not mean the futile proposals made during previous rounds of talks; and third we must be certain of Israeli intentions by seeing progress in the Syrian-Israeli talks, (?with emphasis) on the security and withdrawal issues.

[Al-Shar'] Last question.

[Correspondent] The latest initiative proceeds from the goal of reaching a peace agreement before the Israeli and U.S. elections. Do you see an opportunity for reaching an agreement in the months ahead?

[Al-Shar'] The opportunity exists, but will Israel seize it or not? I cannot answer this. Syria has always been serious and interested in reaching a just and comprehensive peace in the region as soon as possible and tangible and substantive progress on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks as quickly as possible. Thank you.

Damascus TV Version of Comments

JN1912214495 Damascus Syrian Arab Television
Network in Arabic 2100 GMT 19 Dec 95

[Report on a news conference by Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' and Lebanese Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz with unidentified correspondents at the B'abda Presidential Palace on 19 December — recorded]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Within the framework of the continuous consultation and coordination between the

leaders of both fraternal countries Syria and Lebanon, Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' arrived in Beirut this morning to hold talks with senior Lebanese officials on the latest developments in the Middle East peace talks.

Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' headed immediately for the B'abda Palace where he was received by Lebanese President Ilyas al-Hirawi in the presence of Nabih Birri, Lebanese Chamber of Deputies speaker, and Lebanese Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz. Al-Shar' conveyed to President al-Hirawi a message from President Hafiz al-Asad on the developments in the peace process and the results of the visit to the region by the U.S. secretary of state.

At the end of the talks, the Syrian and Lebanese foreign ministers held a news conference. Answering a question from the Syrian Arab Television, al-Shar' said that his meeting with President al-Hirawi was good and amicable.

Answering a question on the main pending points in the talks between Syria and Israel, al-Shar' said:

[Begin recording] [al-Shar'] There are 10 points that include ideas, opinions, and stances. They are not proposals in the true sense of the word. They relate to procedural issues, such as the mechanism of resuming the negotiations and the level of negotiations. They also relate to some issues of a substantive nature. I could say that these 10 points Secretary Christopher brought with him to Damascus and on which he briefed His Excellency President Hafiz al-Asad elicited a response and comment. Some were welcomed, some evoked comment, and others did not earn the required approval.

[Correspondent] What are the main pending points?

[Al-Shar'] As I said, they are not specific points on the basis of which a solution may or may not depend. They express the viewpoint of the Israeli Government, and Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres specifically, as a practical method to reach a just and comprehensive solution. It proceeds from an agreement on the Syrian-Israeli track to be followed by an agreement on the Lebanese-Israeli track...

[Correspondent, interrupting] What were the matters you discussed with President al-Hirawi?

[Al-Shar'] The meeting with His Excellency President Ilyas al-Hirawi was, as usual, good and amicable. I conveyed to his excellency a message from President Hafiz al-Asad dealing with the results of the visit to Damascus by Secretary Christopher and with what he briefed us on. We also discussed some issues of common interest during the meeting.

[Correspondent] One of the points discussed by Shim'on Peres yesterday was respect for calm on the Lebanese border. How genuine is this point and was it discussed with the Lebanese side?

[Al-Shar'] At his meeting with President Hafiz al-Asad, Secretary Christopher presented what he heard from Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres when he met President Clinton in Washington.

We have sensed flexibility on several of these points. Some indicate that attaining the goal is more important than scrutinizing the means or procedures leading to the goal. Another important point was that the timetable should not be at the expense of reaching an agreement and a speedy and complete withdrawal. In Syria, we have always called for a speedy withdrawal without saying how many years it should take. We have always spoken of months. This is also another positive point we heard from Secretary Christopher on behalf of Israeli Prime Minister Peres.

As for calm in south Lebanon, we are against escalation in south Lebanon. Syria's stance in this regard is known. We see that what takes place in south Lebanon sometimes goes beyond the reasonable limits. This is because of Israeli shelling of Lebanese villages and cities and grave human losses among Lebanese civilians as well as Lebanese Resistance retaliation for this provocation by firing Katyusha rockets on northern Israel.

We do not support such escalation. We support calming things down in south Lebanon. This does not negate the concept and understanding reached in the summer of 1993. That understanding stipulated that the resistance has a legitimate right to defend its land inside Lebanese territory.

[Correspondent] What is your response to what was reported by the Israeli newspaper HA'ARETZ that Syria and Israel will sign an agreement on security in southern Lebanon?

[Al-Shar'] Such talk, which appeared in an Israeli paper, is baseless. We have deduced nothing concerning this topic from our talks with Christopher and Dennis Ross or from any other source. Lebanon conducts negotiations through its officials. Syria does not negotiate on behalf of Lebanon at all. This is well known to Israel, the United States, and other countries.

[Correspondent] The latest initiative proceeds from the goal of reaching a peace agreement before the Israeli and U.S. elections. Do you see an opportunity for reaching an agreement in the months ahead?

[Al-Shar'] The opportunity exists, but will Israel seize it or not? I cannot answer this. Syria has always been serious and interested in reaching a just and comprehensive peace in the region as soon as possible and tangible and substantive progress on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks as quickly as possible. [passage omitted] [end recording]

Assassins of Shaykh al-Halabi Arrested

NC1912172595 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic
1630 GMT 19 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] A military source in the army command has stated that investigations by the intelligence directorate into the assassination of Shaykh Nizar al-Halabi have led to the culprits' arrest. They are: Lebanese national Khalid Hamid, Palestinian national Munir 'Abbud, Lebanese national Ahmad al-Kasm, Palestinian national Wasim 'Abd-al-Mu'ti, and Lebanese national Rabi' Nab'ah.

The group members admitted belonging to an extremist sectarian organization run by wanted fugitive Palestinian national Ahmad 'Abd-al-Karim al-Sa'di, a.k.a. Abu-Muhjin. The detained confessed to assassinating Shaykh Nizar al-Halabi in the Beirut locality of Qasqas on 31 August 1995 on the instructions of Abu-Muhjin.

The detained members also admitted that the assassination was prompted by ideological reasons—a contradiction between the jihad with which they are affiliated and the group with which the victim was affiliated.

The interrogations revealed that the group was financed and trained through contacts with external quarters. Their confessions have been verified by facts and conclusive evidence seized for the investigation.

The investigation has revealed that the so-called Abu-Muhjin is running and directing other networks in Beirut and Tripoli. Some of these networks' members have been detained. They are: Lebanese nationals Sa'id al-Shahhal, Fu'ad al-Zayn, Ra'id al-Sum, 'Imad

al-'Ali, and 'Abd-al-Rahman Fa'iq, a.k.a. Abu-Katibah, Lebanese recruit Wasim 'Abdallah, and Lebanese policeman Tariq 'Abdallah.

During the investigations they admitted that along with fugitive defendant Ahmad al-Rifa'i they carried out several terrorist operations in Tripoli, including the attack on the mufti of the north, Shaykh Taha al-Sabunji, in Bqa' Sifrin during the summer of 1994. They twice planned to assassinate Shaykh Taha Naji—in September 1995 and in November 1995. They planned to blow up the School of Culture in Tripoli with a booby-trapped car in November 1995.

They blew up liquor stores and night clubs in Tripoli and its suburbs during 1993 and 1994. They also planned to carry out explosive operations at the end of 1995. The investigation also demonstrated that group members carried out intelligence activities in Beirut during the summer of 1995. Six other members currently being held for interrogation took part in these activities. Some undertook training courses abroad.

Following a meeting chaired by Judge 'Adnan 'Addum and military Judge Nasri Lahhud and attended by military intelligence officials, the entire file and the detained will be referred to the judiciary.

Hizballah Team in Tehran Studying Christopher Trip

MM2012103795 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic
20 Dec 95 pp 1, 6

[Unattributed report: "Suspects Accused Of Killing 'al-Ahbash' Leader Arrested"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Beirut, AL-HAYAH — AL-HAYAH has learned that a delegation from Hizballah's leadership has for days been visiting Tehran for consultation over regional developments in the light of the results of U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher's tour of the region. [passage omitted]

Assembly Ratifies General Amnesty Law*JN2012094795 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0515 GMT 20 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The People's Assembly will resume its sessions today.

The People's Assembly yesterday held a session under Speaker 'Abd-al-Qadir Qaddurah. Prime Minister Mahmud al-Zu'bi, Deputy Prime Minister for Services Affairs Rashid Akhtarini, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs Dr. Salim Yasin, and several ministers attended.

In this session, the Assembly listened to a report by the Constitutional and Legislative Committee regarding the draft law providing a general amnesty for those who committed crimes before 16 November 1995 which was referred by the president of the republic. [passage omitted]

The Assembly discussed the provisions of the law. A vote followed, and the Assembly ratified the law.

Ba'th Party's Al-Ahmar Addresses Hims Branch*JN1912193695 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1615 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The council of Hims Branch of the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party held its annual meeting this morning in the presence of 'Abdallah al-Ahmar, assistant secretary general of the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party. [passage omitted]

After the meeting, the Ba'th Party's assistant secretary general delivered a speech in which he conveyed the greetings of comrade struggler President Hafiz al-Asad, secretary general of the Ba'th Party, to the audience and the masses of Hims Governorate and his wishes to them for success in their work. Al-Ahmar stressed the interest of the leader and the leadership in following up the work of the Ba'th Parties' associations, organizations, and all its members to accomplish the tasks defined in the annual plans. [passage omitted]

The Ba'th Party's assistant secretary general spoke about developments in the Arab and international arenas. He reviewed latest developments in the peace process, stressing Syria's seriousness and desire to achieve just and comprehensive peace based on resolutions of international legitimacy in a way that leads to liberating the territories and restoring rights. He said the state of stalemate and dormancy which the peace process went through since last June was a result of Israel's stands, which were not committed to the requirements of the peace process, and its continued occupation of Arab territories.

Comrade al-Ahmar said that Syria, which made peace its strategic choice, will not relinquish or give up any inch of land or any right. He said that Syria will continue its struggle toward the success of the peace process in achieving its goals according to the bases on which it was launched. In other words, resolutions of international legitimacy, especially UN Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, and 425 and the land-for-peace principle that lead to Israel's full withdrawal from the Golan to the 4 June 1967 borders and from southern Lebanon through equitable [mutakafi'ah] and equal [mutasawiyah] security arrangements. He noted that this just and comprehensive peace that must be achieved should be a real and viable peace — one that achieves Syria's sovereignty over its territories and realizes security and stability in the region. He said Syria hopes that the negotiations, which the Syrian and Israeli parties agreed to resume, will extricate the peace process from its state of dormancy and push it toward achieving its goals as soon as possible.

Comrade al-Ahmar also spoke about a number of Arab issues, stressing the importance of Arab solidarity, working to create suitable circumstances, and mobilizing Arab potentials to push the unionist struggle in the face of challenges and projects which aim at fragmenting and weakening the Arabs. He also spoke about developments in the world in terms of changes, conflicts, and hotbeds of tension that raise concern and instability. He also spoke about the repercussions of these developments on the current and future world situation.

At the end of the meeting, the branch council approved draft reports and recommendations presented by the branch command after the comrades secretary general of the branch, Hims governor, and members of the branch command answered questions from the audience.

Foreign Minister Returns From Lebanon*JN1912210395 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1915 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' returned to Damascus this evening following a visit to Beirut, during which he delivered a message from President Hafiz al-Asad to President Ilyas al-Hirawi.

At the Lebanese-Syrian border point, al-Shar' was seen off by Lebanese Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz and senior Lebanese Foreign Ministry officials.

Visiting Iranian Housing Minister Praises Relations*JN1912211995 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1915 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] Engineer 'Abbas Ahmad-Akhundi, Iranian minister of housing and urban

development, and his delegation arrived in Damascus this afternoon on a visit to Syria lasting several days. He will hold talks with several senior state officials.

The Iranian minister was received at Damascus International Airport by Engineer Husam al-Safadi, minister of housing and utilities; the assistant to the minister of housing and utilities; the Iranian charge d'affaires in Damascus; the Iranian Embassy staff; and several senior officials at the Housing and Utilities Ministry.

In a statement to a SANA correspondent, Ahmad-Akhundi praised the brotherly relations and cooperation between Syria and Iran, describing them as excellent and positive in all areas. He added that the aim of his visit to Syria is to hold talks on ways to promote cooperation and brotherly relations between the two countries.

Talks Called 'Significant Opportunity' for Peace

JN2012111795 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0545 GMT 20 Dec 95

[From the press review]

[FBIS Translated Text] In a commentary entitled "Standard of Seriousness," AL-THAWRAH discusses the resumption of talks on the Syrian-Israeli track in a few days in Washington.

AL-THAWRAH says the resumption of talks on the Syrian-Israeli track, the most important track in the peace process, was not a coincidence, but a natural result of the recent change in the language of the Israeli stand and vocabulary as regards the peace process. This stand was expressed by Shim'on Peres and other Israeli officials in statements which underlined the importance of peace with Syria on the basis of complete withdrawal from the Golan Heights, which link the region's security and stability to a peace agreement with Syria, and which note Syria's right to full sovereignty over the Golan Heights.

AL-THAWRAH: Naturally, the resumption of talks on the basis of this change in the Israeli position will provide a significant opportunity for the peace process. If utilized in a good way, this opportunity may lead to genuine peace in the Middle East, based on comprehensiveness and justice and on the principle of complete withdrawal to the 4 June 1967 lines.

AL-THAWRAH concludes: The current opportunity to move forward in the direction of peace is significant. Concern for that opportunity can only be demonstrated by confirming a serious Israeli position in its new language. Undoubtedly, seriousness is determined by the extent of Israel's decisive commitment to the principles of peace, as determined by the Madrid formula and its international terms of reference. Such

a commitment can translate the new statements on the importance of peace with Syria and its link to the complete withdrawal, and the recognition of its sovereignty over the Golan Heights, into action.

Paper Underlines Unity of Lebanon, Syria Tracks

JN2012110395 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0545 GMT 20 Dec 95

[From the press review]

[FBIS Translated Text] In an editorial entitled "The Precious Opportunity," TISHRIN notes the message which Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' conveyed from President Hafiz al-Asad to Lebanese President Ilyas al-Hirawi, and which concerns the outcome of U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher's visit, the peace process, and the resumption of talks between Syria and Israel on 27 December.

TISHRIN says the unity of the Syrian and Lebanese tracks is now a basic and firm fact in the peace process. This is because any solution on the Syrian track will be followed by a solution on the Lebanese track. Syria will continue to support Lebanon in order to help it protect its rights and regain its territory in view of the brotherly and strategic ties between the two sisterly states, and in view of the common destiny and the unity of blood between the one Syrian and Lebanese people; a unity that was baptized throughout history and in all crises and events.

TISHRIN adds: With the support and backing of Syria, Lebanon was able to put an end to a brutal war and it became impossible for anyone to make Lebanon turn backward. Lebanon now has entered the phase of peace, reconciliation, and economic and social progress. It also bolstered the strength of its national unity and its sisterly ties with Syria.

TISHRIN asserts that the hopes which were revived by the resumption of talks between Syria and Israel, created a new precious opportunity to arrive at substantive and positive results to achieve the just and comprehensive peace in the region. Will Israel take advantage of that opportunity?

TISHRIN concludes: It is important not to jump into conclusions. However, one must note that the Israeli flexibility as regards the procedural measures, the means to address issues, and the requirements of peace must be translated into practice through clear stands toward the substantive and basic issues. In this regard, Syria has repeatedly stressed that peace has been, and will remain, its strategic option and that it will not spare any effort to continue its quest to achieve the just, comprehensive, and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Radio Criticizes Likud For Anti-Peace Campaign
*JN1912162695 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio
 Network in Arabic 1237 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[Station commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] Gentlemen: International circles expressed cautious optimism over the outcome of negotiations between Syria and Israel slated for 27 December under the United States' sponsorship and participation. It is obvious that the success of the Washington negotiations requires true intentions and an absolute determination to translate intentions into facts and events on the ground. Some Israeli officials showed encouraging signs and intentions that remain to be translated into tangible action.

It is important to speed up steps and compensate for time and efforts that were wasted in the past. This is especially true since the extremist Israeli right wing under the Likud's leadership did not hide its determination to abort the talks, using, as usual, as its pretext that same old tune, which was exposed and superseded by events. That is, the tune of alleged security.

The Likud's leader who is planning to destroy the peace process in the name of security does not really want peace or security. He wants the continuation of the Israeli policy of occupation, usurpation, and escalation in a way that brings the region back to the climate prior to the U.S. peace initiative and destroys all efforts exerted over the past four years to extricate the Middle East from the whirlpool of wars and conflicts.

The entire world fully realizes that the Israeli withdrawal from the Golan and southern Lebanon is the ABC of peace. Most of Israel's politicians realize this fact as well, except the Likud's leader who insists on misleading the Israelis by raising the peace-for-peace slogan and not the land-for-peace slogan.

The Likud launched this instigation campaign because the proposed Washington talks will not only discuss the security aspect, but will also discuss all elements of the peace process, namely, withdrawal, peace, and security in a way that ensures tackling the essence of the conflict and finding a satisfactory and just solution.

Observers considered this comprehensive discussion a positive step in itself. This is especially so since Syria considers full Israeli withdrawal as a top condition and basis for peace. Moreover, any security arrangements reached can reinforce peace, but are not an alternative to peace. Peace in the end is the real guarantee of security and withdrawal is the basic prelude to peace.

Gentlemen: It was not out of appeasement or coincidence that the United States stressed the importance of peace with Syria and Lebanon. Likewise, it was not out of appeasement or coincidence that Secretary Christopher and Israel's Prime Minister himself said that Syria's participation is essential in order to realize a comprehensive peace and that peace with Syria means peace with the Arabs. Syria has always been and will continue to be the heart and conscience of the nation. Syria's positions on an honorable, just, and comprehensive peace reflects the will of the Arabs.

One is mistaken to think that pan-Arab cohesion among the Arabs in all their countries, whether in the East or the West, has disappeared. This cohesion is a fact of history, geography, civilization, language, and belief in joint fate. When many Arab governments refused to submit to pressures and called on Israel to fully withdraw from the Golan and southern Lebanon, they were reflecting with this stand pan-Arab cohesion and the fact that Syria enjoys the support of the Arabs everywhere.

As events over the past four years confirm, Syria does not relinquish, but adheres to just and comprehensive peace that restores territories and rights and maintains the Arabs' dignity and ends all traces of Israeli occupation. It is in Israel's interest to respond to the bases of a just peace in the end. Without this, peace will remain an empty slogan and will not achieve security.

Paper Urges 'Effective' European Role in Region
*JN2012110595 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio
 Network in Arabic 0545 GMT 20 Dec 95*

[From the press review]

[FBIS Translated Text] Under the headline "Europe and the Required Effective Role," AL-BA'TH writes: The Syrian-French ties are marked by confidence and seriousness because the Syrian diplomacy is still working on encouraging Europe to play a role in the Mediterranean region. For more than a quarter of a century, Syria has been interested in seeing Europe making pure European initiatives in the Middle East that will be in harmony with what was approved by the world community and its specialized agencies.

AL-BA'TH calls for reviving the Euro-Arab dialogue in order to establish pillars for fruitful and constructive cooperation. The future requires an independent and serious European understanding of the needs of the Arab region as a whole on the security and social levels.

AL-BA'TH notes that European security is negatively affected by tensions in the Mediterranean basin. Therefore, Europe must undertake a move in the region and

help create the suitable circumstances to achieve peace and security in the Middle East.

AL-BA'TH concludes: Despite the late European role, which began to show signs of independence, peace is

still slow. Europe can still place its political and material weight behind the international efforts that seek to keep danger and tension, which influence all the Europeans, away from the region.

SAARC Launches 'Preferential Trading' Body
BK1912131195 Dhaka THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS
in English 8 Dec 95 p 5

[Editorial: "SAPTA Is Born"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Seven South Asian states, grouped in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), initiated the process of trade liberalisation in the region by launching [South Asian] Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) on last Thursday [7 December]. The SAARC member states agreed to form the trading bloc providing tariff concessions to 226 items initially. It is true that businesses in the new trade bloc may not benefit much from tariff cuts on a limited number of items. But the launching of SAPTA will contribute significantly to confidence-building among the SAARC countries. Once the nations are confident that such steps benefit their economies, the second round of trade talks by SAARC leaders will certainly be more effective and meaningful. In the second round, the countries in the region should move for forming the free trade zone in South Asia. The intra-regional trade has not grown much among the SAARC countries over the years. Rather the available statistics show that the volume of intra-regional trade declined after the formation of SAARC. But SAARC as well as business leaders agree that SAPTA may help boost intra-regional trade from the present level of three billion U.S. dollars annually to 15 billion dollars by the turn of the century. The volume of intra-regional trade would increase more once the nations agree to form the free trade zone and liberalise further their trading regimes.

The launching of SAPTA is a welcome development for the peoples of South Asia as this would go a long way in transforming the economies of the SAARC countries. The initiative would be more meaningful if the big economies in the region, especially India and Pakistan, open their markets for the smaller neighbours. The flexible and liberal attitude of big partners of SAARC would help confidence-building which is needed for expanding regional cooperation. Such examples are not rare in Europe and North America where the big economies pull up their unequal partners. In the long run, both gained. The countries in South Asia could not take up any effective cooperation programme other than the SAPTA. The future cooperation among the countries would largely depend on SAPTA's success. The SAARC member countries should not create any problem for smooth implementation of the SAPTA agreement that would provide tariff concessions to each other. Indeed, the future of setting up a free trade zone will largely depend on the success of SAPTA. There is no denying that in all trade blocs around the world disputes arise. Therefore,

the member countries make institutional arrangements to deal with such disputes. The SAARC countries should also establish an institution for monitoring the progress under SAPTA as well as for adjudicating the trade disputes among the partners. The SAARC leaders should not forget that if SAPTA fails, the existence of SAARC would be meaningless.

In fact, the process of confidence-building began in South Asia with the formation of SAARC. Today SAARC celebrates its first decade of operation as a regional forum. During the last ten years, the countries in the region could not achieve much towards forging greater regional cooperation. Because the brighter landscape in South Asia has some dark corners. The mistrust and acrimony have slowed down the progress in confidence-building. The South Asian regional forum was formed ten years ago to overcome the problems of misunderstanding and suspicion in the region. It would be wrong to say that the efforts have all gone in vain.

But SAARC's achievements have been far short of expectations. This makes it imperative that all member-countries of SAARC should endeavor collectively to remove the causes of distrust, if they really want the regional forum to proceed effectively on to effective cooperation.

Conference Stresses Need for International Trade
BK1312082695 Kathmandu THE KATHMANDU
POST in English 12 Dec 95

[Report by "Post Reporter" — received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] KATHMANDU, Dec 11— With the emergence of powerful trading blocs like the European Union, North American Free Trade Association, ASEAN and APEC [Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation], apprehensions of possible marginalisation of the SAARC [South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation] region appears to have caused a great deal of anxiety among the governments and organisations in the region.

This was what one could understand listening to the deliberations of the inaugural session participants of South Asia Conference on International and Regional Trade— Implications of Non-cooperation, inaugurated by Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba today. Addressing the conference, Prime Minister Deuba stressed on the need for globalization of international trade to provide maximum benefits to all the countries, and emphasised that without international and regional cooperation in trade related matters, no nation could prosper in the long run.

Referring to protectionism in regional and international trade, Deuba said, The old argument that protectionism must be continued to save jobs is no more valid.

Making his keynote address, SAARC Secretary General Yadav Kant Silwal stressed the need for cooperation among member countries in the core areas of trade and economic relations in order to enhance the collective strength of the region in the international trading system.

Expressing happiness that SAARC has started marching on the path of cooperation, Silwal said, a resurgence of a deeper understanding of the meaning of cooperation in trade and other issues have already taken place in all the SAARC member countries. He also held the view that there is more or less a consensus in the political front in the region.

The event is being organized by the Calcutta-based Consumer Unity and Trust Society (CUTS) under its South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) programme, which consists of a network of NGOs [Nongovernmental Organizations], economists and journalists, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and hosts Pro Public and Leaders of Nepal. The three day conference is being attended by economists, academics and policy planners of the region.

Two-Day SAARC Conference Opens in New Delhi

Sri Lankan Minister Gives Address

*BK1912122995 Colombo Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation International Service in English
1045 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar has called on the leaders and the ministers of the SAARC [South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation] nations to manifest the courage of their convictions to realize the full potential of their collective endeavors and to fulfill the expectations of the people. Addressing the 15th session of the SAARC council of ministers in New Delhi, Mr. Kadirgamar suggested that SAARC should embark upon an open and frank consideration of contentious political issues which will prepare the members of the SAARC council of ministers for further free and frank exchange. He said that one practical way out of this difficulty was for SAARC ministers and officials to meet as frequently and regularly as circumstances warrant to forge a common viewpoint and decision in interaction with the outside world. Minister Kadirgamar said that in this context it gave him great pleasure to formally propose that Sri Lanka host a ministerial meeting in the field of housing by way of preparation for a common SAARC position and the habitat (?two) meeting to be held in Istanbul in June next year.

Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao urged the members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation to tackle poverty or risk being a global backwater. Mr. Rao told the meeting of SAARC foreign ministers that they did not wish South Asia to be a backwater on the swiftly changing world or for the people to be condemned to struggle for basic requirements of health, education, and nutrition. Prime Minister Rao, the SAARC chairman, told the diplomats from the seven SAARC nations that the credibility of any growth strategy could be ensured only by the participation of the society as a whole. He welcomed the recent preferential trading agreement between SAARC members but said intra-SAARC trade needed to be considerably enhanced.

Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee said that SAARC nations needed to set aside reservations of the past over narrow prejudices or unreasonable fears to become an economic powerhouse in the next century.

Bangladesh and the Maldives too have called for a means to prevent the infighting blocking progress toward cooperation within the SAARC members. Political tensions between India and Pakistan, the two main nations of the group, have delayed progress toward free trade and close links on a host of issues.

Addressing the session to mark the group's 10th anniversary, Bangladeshi Foreign Minister Mustafizur Rahman said SAARC has made slower progress than other regional groups because political bickering has obstructed cooperation.

SAARC comprising India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives cooperates on a wide range of issues to enhance regional development, but its Charter bans discussion of contentious bilateral disputes. SAARC represents 1.2 billion people with a combined gross international [as heard] product of \$300 billion. Discussions among SAARC foreign ministers will continue today on topics including drug abuse, terrorism, tourism, transport, and environment.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Speaks

*BK1812162095 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network
in Urdu 1500 GMT 18 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali emphasized the need for sincere and honest efforts for peace and stability in South Asia. Addressing a commemorative session on the 10th anniversary of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation [SAARC], he said lasting peace in the region will help solve basic issues and differences affecting our relations.

Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali said the SAARC has completed 10 years of its existence, and we must move forward to consolidate the gains of the past 10 years, while entering into the second decade. The foreign minister said the region has turned a new leaf with the establishment of the South Asian Preferential Trade Arrangement which will benefit member countries. He also referred to the establishment of South Asian Development Fund, saying it will open a new viable channel for inflow of financial resources into the region.

Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, who inaugurated the conference, called for speeding up the pace of trade contacts to promote a free trade process in the region.

Several 'Important Decisions' Reached

*BK1912161295 Delhi All India Radio Network
in English 1530 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[FBIS Transcribed Text] SAARC [South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation] nations have resolved to establish a free trade zone by the turn of the century

and in any case not later than a decade. The decision was taken at the two-day meeting of the SAARC foreign ministers which ended in New Delhi today. The SAARC committee on economic cooperation will constitute a group of experts to examine action required to achieve this.

The external affairs minister, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, said that several other important decisions, including signing of an agreement for cooperation between SAARC and European Union, were taken at the meeting. He told newsmen that the second round of trade liberalization and tariff reduction under SAPTA [South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement] will be held in Sri Lanka in March. A study to promote joint ventures will also be made. Mr. Mukherjee said the SAARC foreign ministers have also decided to work for a common approach by countries of the region at international conferences, including the World Food Summit and Habitat II conference slated for next year.

Afghanistan

OIC Blames Instability on Foreign Intervention

LD1912212995 *Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] In its resolution the Islamic Conference Organization [OIC] foreign ministers conference mentions foreign intervention as the main cause of fighting and instability in Afghanistan.

At a news conference held this afternoon at the headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, esteemed Dr. Najibollah Lafra'i, minister of state for foreign affairs, said:

[Announcer-read] Foreign intervention as the main cause of fighting and instability in Afghanistan has been included in the resolution of the conference. The resolution seriously calls for the ending of these interventions.

Dr. Lafra'i added: The head of the Afghan delegation delivered a speech at this conference and conveyed the humble voice of the people of Afghanistan to the world public with regard to the lack of assistance to the people of Afghanistan by the Islamic countries and (international) organizations. The Afghanistan delegation also met separately with the OIC secretary general, OIC assistant secretary general, and heads of delegations from various countries. At these meetings the Afghan delegation expressed Afghanistan's readiness to resolve the issues through talks and understanding and explained the measures taken by the Islamic State of Afghanistan (in this regard), which were welcomed.

The OIC secretary general has assured the Afghan delegation that the OIC would henceforth play a major role in finding a solution to the issue of Afghanistan.

The OIC's periodical conference was held in Conakry, capital of Guinea, from 9-12 December, with the participation of a 50-member delegation.

Esteemed Dr. Lafra'i, who had gone to Conakry to take part in the 23d periodical session of the OIC foreign ministers, returned to Kabul yesterday afternoon.

IRNA Reports Protest in Taleban-Controlled Areas

LD1712103395 *Tehran IRNA in English 0843 GMT 17 Dec 95*

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kabul, Dec. 17, IRNA — Public protest in Taleban-controlled provinces, particularly in Herat, is flaring up against the suppression and pressures exerted by Taleban troops against residents, according to reports from southwestern Afghanistan.

People who have recently reached the Afghan capital Kabul from the southwestern provinces of the country

divulged the presence of foreign advisors at the group's military bases, saying that this was another reason for the growing public anger against the Talebans.

Also, it was reported that President Borhanoddin Rabbani is reorganizing his troops in the provinces of Ghowr and Herat to recapture the southwestern areas from the militiamen.

Public anger in these regions of the country has allegedly frightened the Taleban group and Pakistani businessmen were said to have been in doubt about transporting their goods to Central Asian republics via Herat.

It is surmised that a guerrilla operation in the areas held by the religious students would trap them into a horrible situation, noted a Pakistani military source.

The Taleban militiamen, on the other hand, believe that they will be seriously threatened if the Rabbani Government maintained its hold on the capital.

Unconfirmed reports disclosed that a number of the Taleban military bases in the Herat and Neemroze regions came under attack last week.

Iran's Borujerdi Arrives on Peace Mission

LD1912181795 *Tehran IRNA in English 1609 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Bamian, Afghanistan, Dec. 19, IRNA — Deputy Foreign Minister for Asia and Pacific, Alaeddin Borujerdi, arrived here on Tuesday [19 December] in continuation of Iran's efforts to end the war and clashes in Afghanistan. He was welcomed by Chairman of the Council of the Islamic unity Party of Afghanistan, Abdulkarim Khalili.

In a meeting with Khalili after arrival Borujerdi regretted continuation of clashes in some regions of Afghanistan and expressed satisfaction with establishment of peace in Bamian.

He pointed out that negotiation is the best way for resolving the current crisis in Afghanistan, adding that the Islamic Republic of Iran invites all belligerent groups in Afghanistan to negotiation in order to solve problems of Afghanistan.

Borujerdi said that people of Afghanistan are in acute economic conditions and suffer from shortage of essentials. He stressed that it is the duty of all Muslim countries, especially the Islamic Republic of Iran to render assistance to that country.

Khalili said that the Islamic Unity Party declares its serious opposition to the war and bloodshed in Afghanistan.

He thanked efforts of the Islamic Republic of Iran for ending the clashes in that country and said: "We will

welcome any plan bringing peace to Afghanistan and securing interests of all Afghan groups."

Taleban Offensive on Kabul City Continuing

Attack Reportedly Repelled

*LD1712224995 Tehran IRNA in English
2216 GMT 17 Dec 95*

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kabul, Dec. 17, IRNA — A Taleban offensive was repelled by the government troops at three strategic points in south and southwest of Kabul on Saturday [16 December] night, announced the Afghan government sources here on Sunday.

The Afghan defence ministry spokesman, Amrullah, told IRNA that, the Taleban militia Saturday night launched offensives at the Meidan Shahr, Rishkhor and Gol Bagh regions in the south and southwestern Kabul but were forced to withdraw by the government forces.

In an armed clash which lasted over two hours, a number of the taleban troops were killed or wounded and a part of their military equipment was destroyed, added the spokesman.

The source did not disclose the extent of the casualties suffered by the government troops.

According to the spokesman, the offensive was aimed at capturing a part of the government position overlooking the Afghan capital, Kabul.

Amrullah said that the government troops are ready to repel any attack of the Taleban troops, promising that they would try at the first opportunity to push the Taleban forces back from areas around Kabul in order to bring the besieged capital out of the opposition's artillery range.

The Taleban group by capturing the Chahar Asiab region at the south and southwestern Kabul last October brought the Afghan capital under its direct fire range.

The Taleban Saturday night fired three rockets into Kabul with no reported toll.

Government Preempts Offensive

*LD1912164795 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network
in Pashto 1530 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] The Islamic army artillery units have preempted a Taleban offensive in the south of Kabul. Quoting Ministry of Defense sources, BAKHTAR has reported to us that this morning, artillery units fired into Charasiab and the surrounding heights and preempted an enemy offensive from this direction. As a result, a number of Taleban fortified positions were destroyed, too.

The Air Force bombers today heavily bombarded the Taleban base at Talemi Markaz [former military training base in Charasiab used by Taleban as headquarters]. Two of the bombs precisely hit the Taleban concentration base. No report has been received about casualties or damage.

Benzir Bhutto's Taleban fired 58 rockets into the residential areas of Kabul city, where loss of life and material was inflicted on the civilian residents. [words indistinct]

Central Kabul Under Rocket Attack

*LD2012112695 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic
of Iran First Program Network in Persian
1030 GMT 20 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] At least seven Katyusha missiles and heavy weapon shells hit central areas of Kabul at midday today.

Initial reports say that today's missile attacks on Kabul did not cause any casualties but did inflict damage.

The attack on Kabul, which is attributed to the Taleban group by Afghan Defense Ministry sources, was carried out shortly after a fighter jet of the government forces had attacked the positions of the Taleban in Chahar Asiab and areas south of Kabul.

Bangladesh

Objectives, Importance of SAARC Outlined

*BK2012113495 Dhaka Radio Bangladesh Network
in English 1600 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[Station Commentary]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Bangladesh has reaffirmed its firm commitment to implement the objectives and principles of the SAARC [South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation] charter. While addressing the 16th session of the SAARC council of ministers in New Delhi on Monday, Bangladesh Foreign Minister A.S.M. Mustafizur Rahman said the SAARC since its founding in Dhaka in 1985 has made considerable progress in different identified fields. These are intraregional trade cooperation and eradication of poverty, the Bangladesh foreign minister pointed out. Mustafiz said as all the seven member states entered into the second decade of SAARC, Bangladesh is firmly committed to face the challenges ahead of the South Asian region. Significantly, Bangladesh placed at the New Delhi meeting an eight-point proposal for consideration by the SAARC council of ministers. The proposals include sharing of vitally important water resources in the region where SAARC countries share common waterways.

The Bangladesh foreign minister referred to the operation of the South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement [SAPTA] and said it has to ensure that the least developed countries like Bangladesh share the benefits [words indistinct] from the agreement. Bangladesh has, in fact, reasons to feel elated at the achievements made by the SAARC over the last decade. While there has been public seminars and workshops on certain areas of vital importance to Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives, the SAARC parley this month made a leap forward when the SAPTA was placed into operation. Vigorous intraregional trade in South Asia [words indistinct] tariff barriers and at reduced tariff will surely go a long way in doing away with costly imports from the Western countries and contributing to poverty alleviation of an estimated 1 billion South Asians.

The main objective of the SAARC as well as all such regional groupings is to provide a better quality of life for the people. Undoubtedly, economic cooperation supported by trade liberalization is the vital link in the process that leads to the achievement of that objective. A significant change is taking place in the global pattern of manufacturing and trade. New economic forces are now competing with the already established giants of the world economy. Against this background and in the face of trade barriers and other distortions in the world market, the seven member states of the SAARC need to harness the wealth of human and natural resources these countries are endowed with and accelerate the economic growth of South Asia. The SAPTA will hopefully usher in a new and promising era of economic cooperation and intraregional trade.

Another step in enhancing the economic development of SAARC countries could be made [word indistinct] in the functioning of the South Asian Development Fund. [Words indistinct] South Asia's own resources, particularly capital resources that are scarce in the SAARC region. Japan and the European Union countries have already evinced keen interest in contributing to the fund. The SAARC [words indistinct] and other bodies are also making progress smoothly due to collaborative efforts of the seven member states of the SAARC. Needed at the moment is private initiative in achieving the goals of the SAARC. Things are surely moving in the right direction. The SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry is functioning. Crucial is the launching of the South Asian News Agency, SANA. The news agency to be formally floated on 27 December next by foreign secretary Farooq Sobhan in Dhaka will focus intraregional experiences in different economic and social issues and help bring a consensus of ideas for the ultimate

solution. The SANA is yet another giant step taken by Bangladesh.

Commission Takes Steps To Ensure Fair Election

BK1812150095 Dhaka Radio Bangladesh Network
in Bengali 1200 GMT 18 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] With a view to ensuring a free and fair holding of the forthcoming parliamentary elections, a directive has been issued to the concerned authorities to transfer all deputy commissioners, superintendents of police, executive officers of subdistricts, and officials in charge of subdistricts who are posted in one place for more than three years. The Election Commission in a press release issued today urged the concerned authorities to speedily implement this directive.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission held a meeting with the officials of the Ministry of Information and the official media of the government at the Election Commission Secretariat today to discuss the issue of giving equal opportunity to the political parties participating in the forthcoming parliamentary elections for conducting their election campaign through the official media. The meeting was presided over by the chief election commissioner, Justice A.K.M. Sadeque. While addressing the meeting, Chief Election Commissioner Justice A.K.M. Sadeque directed the official media to remain totally neutral while carrying out their work on the occasion of the forthcoming parliamentary elections. He also directed the concerned media to abide by the regulations that have been formulated to give equal opportunity to the political parties contesting the elections. Officials who attended the meeting pledged to abide by the directives and regulations formulated by the Election Commission in the interest of holding free, fair, and neutral elections. The meeting also decided to set up a full-fledged information cell in the Election Commission, which will comprise of representatives from the radio, television, and Directorate of Information for monitoring the daily program of the official media to ascertain whether they are following the directives and regulations issued by the Election Commission. The meeting was attended, among others, by the secretary of the Election Commission Secretariat, Mohammed Irshadul Haq; Information Secretary Syed Amirul Mulk; additional secretary of the Election Commission, S.M. Zakaria; director general of Bangladesh Television, Resalat Ahmed; Principal Information Officer Abdur Rahim; director general of Radio Bangladesh, Mohiuddin Ahmed; and general manager of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha, BSS, D.P. Barua.

Until the finalization of the list of candidates contesting the parliamentary elections, radio and television will broadcast the news of the political parties in accordance

with the ratio of their seats in the last Parliament. After the finalization of the list of contesting candidates, radio and television will broadcast their news in accordance with the ratio of the number of candidates of the political parties contesting the elections. This opportunity will be provided only to those parties who field at least 30 candidates for the elections.

Monitoring Cells Begin Work

*BK1912143495 Dhaka Radio Bangladesh Network
in Bengali 1200 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] The cells instituted by the Election Commission for monitoring the media and controlling the law and order situation have started functioning in Dhaka. The law and order regulatory cell is comprised of representatives of the police, the Bangladesh Rifles, and Ansars [paramilitary forces]. The media monitoring cell has been formed with representatives of the radio, television, and the Directorate of Information. It has been reported that the commission is reviewing the activities of these two cells on a daily basis. It should be mentioned that the Election Commission decided to set up these cells to ensure the free, fair, and impartial holding of elections in the country.

The final date for surrendering illegal arms and explosives is tomorrow. The government said that stern legal action will be taken against those who fail to surrender illegal arms and explosives. The government issued a directive to the owners of illegal arms and explosives and also to the manufacturers of these arms and their ingredients to surrender these items at the nearest police station within the stipulated time. The government has assured that no action will be taken against those who will surrender these illegal arms, explosives, or its ingredients within the specified time.

Voter Registration Deadline Extended

*BK1812070995 Dhaka Radio Bangladesh Network
in Bengali 1500 GMT 17 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] The Election Commission has extended the deadline for the enrollment of eligible people who have not yet registered their names on the new voters list until the 24th of this month. The Election Commission, in a press notification issued in Dhaka today, said this extension of the deadline was made in view of the rescheduling of the forthcoming parliamentary elections. The commission has asked people who have not yet registered their names on the voters list to fill out Forms No. 2 and 4 and submit them to the concerned registration officers before the new deadline. The press notification added that district election officers are working as registration officers and have a sufficient quantity of these forms. The

commission has sought the cooperation of political leaders, workers, and social workers to help in the registration of voters before the 24th of this month.

The Election Commission has also directed the Home Ministry and the district administration to suspend the issuance of arms licenses until the completion of the elections in hopes of maintaining law and order in the country during the parliamentary elections.

In the meantime, the Election Commission has warned all those concerned against writing on walls to support any candidate in the forthcoming parliamentary elections. The commission, in a press notification, said it has come to its attention that graffiti is continuing in some areas. It added that the concerned candidates will be held responsible for this graffiti and stern action will be taken against them. The Election Commission again called upon all those concerned to wipe out this graffiti before the 25th of this month.

Jatiya Front To Participate in Elections

*BK1312163795 Dhaka Radio Bangladesh Network
in Bengali 1500 GMT 13 Dec 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] Bangladesh Jatiya [National] Front, formed by eight political parties, will participate in the next parliamentary elections and will field candidates in all the 300 seats of the Parliament.

Front President Alhaj Mohammad Zamir Ali said this at a meeting held in Dhaka today. He called upon all opposition political parties to participate in the forthcoming parliamentary elections in the interest of the continuation of the democratic and constitutional process. He also called upon Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina to resolve the political problems by coming to the discussion table.

External Debt Service Payments Decrease

*BK1912130395 Dhaka THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS
in English 13 Dec 95 pp 1, 8*

[Report by Sarwar Zahan]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] External debt service payments as ratio of export earnings have decreased over the last five years since mid 1990 indicating a steady growth in export incomes, according to competent ministry of finance sources.

They said that the debt service payments as ratio of export earnings had come down to 12 percent now from 23 per cent in 1989-90. The debt service payments as ratio of total foreign exchange earnings is nearly nine per cent now, they claimed.

They emphasised that measures adopted for promotion of exports through the simplification of procedures for implementation of duty-free inputs, gearing customs administration for speedy processing of export cargo, making foreign exchange convertible on the current account and expediting duty drawback application had contributed positively to increasing exports and export earnings. This has kept the debt services repayment situation comfortable although the total debt service payments increased from 301 million US dollars in 1989-90 to US dollars 475 million in 1994-95.

According to statistical information, the country had to repay an amount of 405 million US dollars in 1993-94 with an interest component of 139 million US dollars over the principal amounting to 263 million US dollars. The interest component in debt service payments increased to US dollars 165 million in 1995 while the principal remained at an amount of US dollars 310 million.

Sources said that the interest component in debt service payments is likely to increase comparatively in future as more medium and long-term debts will move towards maturity. The interest component in debt service payments remained at US dollars 116 million in 1989-90, US dollars 135 million in 1992-93 and US dollars 127 million in 1991-92.

According to statistical information, total export earning and total foreign exchange earning amounted to US dollars 1524 million and US dollars 2774 million respectively in 1989-90. Total export earning reached US dollars 3500 million and total foreign exchange earning US dollars 5200 million in 1994-95. At the end of fiscal 1994-95 the total amount of outstanding external debt excluding short term loans had been estimated at US dollars 16325 million.

India

Mukherjee Denies Nuclear Test Planned at Pokaran
*BK1912145495 Delhi All India Radio Network
in English 1430 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[FBIS Transcribed Text] India has denied reports of any attempt being made for a nuclear test at Pokaran site in Rajasthan. The external affairs minister, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, told a press conference in New Delhi that such reports are speculative and baseless. He said India's nuclear program is only for peaceful purposes. He was responding to a query on a report appearing in a New York daily on preparations for a nuclear test by New Delhi. He said there is also no communications on this from the United States.

Answering a question, Mr. Mukherjee said the deployment of Prithvi [short range surface-to-surface] missile

will be decided as the situation demands. The Agni [long range surface-to-surface] missile is only a technical demonstration program which is over.

Article Views U.S. 'Nuclear Apartheid' Policy

*BK2012045195 Delhi INDIAN EXPRESS in English
19 Dec 95 p 9*

[Article by K.P. Nayar: "America Seeks To Perpetuate Nuclear Apartheid"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] With a single, well timed leak to The York Times [as published], the Americans have successfully internationalised what they see as India's heightened nuclear intransigence following the indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

In a comment within hours of the Times story, Datuk Ajit Singh, the secretary-general of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) expressed his disapproval of any nuclear test by India. It is not necessary to look beyond Mr Singh's comments to gauge the impact of any Indian decision to test a second atomic bomb.

President Bill Clinton's letter to Prime Minister Narasimha Rao urging an early conclusion of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the US Assistant Secretary of State Robin Raphel's virtual demarche to South Block [External Affairs Ministry] seeking the presence of Foreign Secretary Salman Haider in Washington to discuss disarmament and the need to take a clear stand by the time the Conference On Disarmament (CD) reconvenes in Geneva next month, have all put the Indian Government in one of its worst foreign policy dilemmas since Independence.

To reduce this dilemma to a question of whether India should test another nuclear weapon or not is to trivialise an issue that is of much greater import — an issue that is of common concern for all of Asia.

India's reservations about the manner in which the US and some of its Western allies are trying to hustle the 38 CD members in Geneva into a comprehensive test ban arrangement stems from Mr Rao's belief that the Cold War is not entirely a thing of the past.

Developments since the collapse of the Soviet Union have convinced Mr Rao that while the issues involved in the Cold War have changed, the war itself is not over. He also believes that the next phase of the Cold War, in its new form, will be fought in Asia.

At a number of brain storming sessions within a closed circle in recent months, the Prime Minister cited rising tensions between the US and China, increasingly

irreconcilable differences between Japan and the US and the hitherto undefined roles of countries like India and Iran on the Asian scene as compelling reasons for the inevitability of another Cold War in the Century that lies ahead.

Some of these discussions have led to a grim realisation in New Delhi that the international system, as it has evolved since World War II, is incapable of coping with the challenges of a potential conflict in the Asian theatre.

This is essentially because the present international system is the product of 1945, which did not at all take Asia into account. In the last half-a-century, Asia has changed beyond the imagination of those who put together the post-World War II international order.

Today, Asia is both prosperous and powerful as reflected in the prosperity of the Asian Tigers and the military might of China. In the years ahead, this trend will be greatly strengthened as India unleashes its potential and Iran claims its place in the region.

Those in the West, who have hitherto managed the international order, are not quite sure how to cope with this change. What is worse, they are unwilling to concede Asia its place in the sun.

In any Cold War that is likely to be fought over Asia's primacy or its role in world affairs, it is important that Asian countries make a determined push for global disarmament. And within this framework of disarmament, time-bound and complete nuclear disarmament, naturally, becomes a priority for countries like India.

If India and China are today less enthusiastic about a comprehensive test ban that is not linked to time-bound nuclear disarmament, it is precisely because they have everything to lose from an international system that not only perpetuates nuclear apartheid, but also denies them a fair share of the global cake.

It is typical of the systematic and calculated campaign that the Americans unleashed on the USSR in the 1970s and the '80s to bring it to heel that forces in Washington are now trying to cleverly confuse the issue of Indian ambivalence towards the CTBT.

By portraying the issue as one where India is trying to test a second nuclear weapon, those who seek a nuclear monopoly that excludes Asia are trying to shift the focus away from disarmament.

In the 1980s, when negotiations were going on in Europe for the reduction of intermediate-range missiles, the Germans, who were on the dividing line between the West and the Soviet bloc, were extremely unenthusiastic about the outcome.

Former German chancellor Helmut Schmidt summed up German fears about the talks with a memorable one-liner: "The shorter the range of the missiles, the deader are the Germans".

The worries in India and some other Asian countries are exactly similar to those of the Germans a decade ago. They stand to lose everything in a world order where they are permanently condemned to being nuclear outcasts even as the Western powers will hold on to their nuclear weapons forever.

True China has its nuclear weapons, the only Asian power to have them. But a CTBT without a commitment to disarmament will permanently consign China to an infinitely inferior status vis-a-vis the US within the nuclear club.

The irony of it all is that exactly one year and seven months ago, Mr Clinton and Mr Rao sat together in Washington and "offered their strong support" for the elimination of nuclear weapons, which they described as "among the most pressing challenges to the security of states in the post-Cold War era".

Simultaneously, they spoke of "cooperative efforts" to achieve a CTBT. But today, there is no mention of the elimination of nuclear weapons as Mr Clinton looks upon the CTBT merely as one of the instruments for his second term in the White House.

U.S. 'Covert Action' on Nuclear Issue Seen

BK2012033995 Madras THE HINDU in English
19 Dec 95 p 13

[Article by C. Raja Mohan: "Coping With Counter-Proliferation"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Indian Government needs to analyse the full implications of the assertion by the Clinton Administration that it will actively discourage a possible nuclear weapons test by India. There may be no reason for India to believe that the American non-proliferation pressures against it will be limited to simple diplomatic finger-wagging.

Assuming that New Delhi will not bend this time to the American non-proliferation demands, the million dollar question is whether the United States will unveil against India the full range of its declared instrumentalities, including covert action, visualised in the current American doctrine of counter-proliferation.

The counter-proliferation doctrine announced by the Clinton Administration in December 1993 explicitly calls for using non-diplomatic means, including military action, to destroy the emerging capabilities in the developing world to build nuclear and other weapons

of mass destruction. The doctrine assumes that despite the best efforts of the American non-proliferation diplomacy, some nations will inevitably move towards acquiring mass destruction weapons. It calls for preparing the U.S. military with appropriate equipment and training to deter the threat of mass destruction weapons from the south.

At the heart of the US counter-proliferation doctrine is the new emphasis on intelligence activity aimed at nuclear and missile activities in the developing world. With the assessment that the basic threat to the U.S. comes from the spread of mass destruction weapons, the American Central Intelligence Agency has set up the Non-Proliferation Centre, to better deal with intelligence aspects of nuclear and missile issues. After the advent of the counter-proliferation strategy that stressed the military means, the CIA's Non-Proliferation Centre has recently created a new directorate for military planning and operations.

It was only logical for the CIA, if only to retain its strategic relevance after the demise of the Soviet Union, to muscle in on the American non-proliferation policy. It has been natural for the organisations to go beyond the simple collection of intelligence relating to proliferation developments and consider counter-proliferation operations.

The Washington Post reported in September that the Clinton Administration was considering a proposal to revive covert action as an instrument of American foreign policy, particularly against the spread of nuclear weapons and missiles, narcotics trade and terrorism. Throughout the Cold War the United States had used covert action extensively against Communist and other regimes considered hostile to American interests. Covert action was seen as providing the United States useful policy options between sending a protest note and launching a full-fledged war against an adversary.

Mr John Deutch, the Director of the CIA told the press in Washington last September he believed the United States needed 'to maintain and perhaps even expand covert action as a foreign policy tool.' According to a senior Clinton Administration official quoted by the Washington Post, "For 40 years, this tool has been geared toward traditional Cold War targets". "Now, we are looking to new targets," the official told The Post. One of the new targets is the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

Influential non-proliferation experts in the United States have been urging the use of covert action and special operations against countries that are suspected of developing nuclear weapons. One of them has suggested that "the theoretical possibilities cover a spectrum from

tampering with shipments of critical inputs before they reach a proliferator to sabotage of production facilities in such a country."

Special military operations, under the Counter-Proliferation doctrine, have not been just abstract ideas. The Clinton Administration did conduct an operation some time ago in Kazakhstan, with the permission of the Government in Almaty, to remove special nuclear material from some facilities that Americans suspected were being eyed by suspected proliferators in West Asia.

Although it has been now elevated to a doctrine level, the use of naked coercion of different kinds in preventing States from going nuclear is not entirely new to American policy.

The United States has sought to prevent every single nuclear power, friend and foe alike, from following its own example of building nuclear weapons. It has been successful only with those countries that were too weak to stand up to American pressures.

There is no evidence at all in the public domain that the Clinton Administration is considering covert action against the Indian nuclear and missile assets. But it will be prudent for India to take note of the declared policy positions of the United States on counter proliferation and covert action and take all necessary precautions. As the pressures build up against India in the coming weeks, New Delhi needs to hold firm in defending its basic national interests.

Nuclear Test Reports Seen as 'Pressure Tactics'

BK2012042295 Madras THE HINDU in English
17 Dec 95 p 6

[Unattributed report: "Ploy To Pressure India on CTBT"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] By making public the speculation by its intelligence agencies that India may be about to conduct its second nuclear test, the Clinton Administration is seeking to put India on the defensive in the upcoming debate on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty [CTBT], set to begin in Geneva early next month. The inspired intelligence leaks appears to be part of the new American pressure tactics to force New Delhi into falling in line on the CTBT, without any consideration to India's national security interests.

Concerned about the recent Indian proposals to link the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty to solemn commitments from the great powers to abolish nuclear weapons within a specific time frame, the United States is determined to derail the Indian diplomatic initiatives to promote the cause of nuclear abolition.

The Clinton Administration wants to hustle through the CTBT in the next few months without any reference to the interest and concerns of other nations. It is in this context that the US President, Mr Bill Clinton had written to the Prime Minister Mr PV Narasimha Rao, as well as other heads of government of the member nations of the Conference on Disarmament [CD] urging quick conclusion of the CTBT. The 38 members of the CD in Geneva are scheduled to meet in January to begin the last lap of negotiations on the CTBT.

Highly placed sources in the United States, in recent conversations in Washington with this correspondent, did not mince words in expressing their anxieties about the official Indian statements linking CTBT to progress in disarmament. They were referring to a series of statements by the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, Dr R Chidambaram, the Foreign Minister, Mr Pranab Mukherjee and the Prime Minister during September and October this year that suggested making the CTBT an integral part of global disarmament.

This statement by top Indian leaders have been seen in Washington as the result of a serious high-level Indian review of its position on the CTBT. Official and non-official sources in Washington said, in an implicit warning, that the Indian effort to link CTBT to disarmament could easily be interpreted as a cover to promote India's own nuclear ambitions. The leak to the New York Times appears to be aimed at raising suspicions of India's intentions and defeat Indian disarmament proposals at Geneva.

But the American threats to isolate India at Geneva are hardly credible. The world is beginning to see the unstated American agenda behind the CTBT: retaining its own primacy in the area of nuclear weapons while putting a cap in the nuclear capabilities of emerging powers such as China and India. The American determination to avoid any serious commitment to disarmament, at the CTBT negotiations, is also becoming clear to all nations who care to see.

The Indian Government has made it clear it remains committed to the objective of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. It is no secret that there has been an intensive debate within India at the official and nonofficial levels on the meaning and implication of the CTBT to both the international movement towards disarmament and India's national security.

Several factors have influenced the Indian debate on CTBT. First, the recent indefinite extension of the NPT [nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty] that has licensed the great powers to possess nuclear weapons forever. Second, the repeated statements of American officials that the CTBT would help put a cap on the nuclear capabil-

ities of countries like India. Third, the recent American decision to dilute its own laws on non-proliferation and resume arms supply to Pakistan. The Brown Amendment has conferred legitimacy to the nuclear weapons of Pakistan. And finally, India will have to look at the fact that the CTBT would permanently freeze India in a nuclear status that is inferior to that of China and Pakistan.

There is concern among defence experts here that without testing and developing a certified nuclear warhead for its missile programme, India will not have a credible deterrent against China. Worse still for India is the nuclear asymmetry vis a vis Pakistan. While Pakistan has acquired a tested nuclear missile warhead design from China, India does not yet have one.

In the coming weeks India will have to craft a position on the CTBT that is consistent with its long-standing principles of disarmament and is in tune with its national security interests. And the Indian Parliament will hopefully make it clear that no outside power can have a veto over Indian nuclear policy.

English Editorials View Need for Nuclear Test BK2012033195

[FBIS Editorial Report] Several English-language Indian dailies carry editorials 18-19 December considering the need for a nuclear test in the wake of a report in THE NEW YORK TIMES that the U.S. Government believes India is preparing such a test.

Delhi THE ASIAN AGE on 18 December carries a 510-word editorial on page 8 entitled: "Stand Up and Be Counted."

It says: "If Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao has not already made up his mind about re-establishing India's position among the nuclear powers of the world, he should do so now and go ahead with another nuclear test. He might also allow a spokesman (since he is reluctant to address such issues himself) to point out that the blame, if any, for this should be directed at Washington, which has apparently decided that it can bully Delhi into submission to its will whenever it feels like. There is no longer any serious logic to the approach of President Bill Clinton to South Asia. He has just rewarded Pakistan, which proudly flaunts a military nuclear capability, by waiving the Pressler amendment to hand it arms estimated by some sources to be worth around a billion dollars. India receives an admonition on the basis of a newspaper story planted by the administration. Not just that, the CIA adds insult to the injury by wagging a finger at India's indigenous weapons capability and offering gratuitous

advice on capping the missiles programme, although the Mr John Deutch, the director of the world's second most infamous cloak-and-dagger agency (the KGB must retain top place on this list) has had the decency not to single out India alone for the advice.

"The rationale offered by Mr Michael McCurry, the White House spokesman, is that 'nuclear testing by any nation state jeopardises the environment in which that goal can be achieved and in the specific case of India, given the regional balance of power, such a test would be a very bad idea.' What is the environment which Mr McCurry is talking about? One in which Pakistan can flagrantly get away with nuclear prowess? An environment in which China can continue nuclear testing, totally oblivious of anyone else's opinion? Does Washington need to be reminded that China has a much larger boundary with India than Pakistan, and that the two neighbours have a history of disputes which has resulted in one bitter war? Can India's defence planners be oblivious to this reality? Indeed, how has the Clinton administration displayed its disapproval of China's insistent and continuous commitment to nuclear power? By extending the Most Favoured Nation status of course.

"Given such realities, India should be commended for restraint rather than condemned for excess. The world knows that the pressure to sign on the nuclear test ban treaty will be intense next year, which is why nations like France are going through with their last tests before they sign on a common dotted line. It is 20 years since India conducted her first — and last — test. If India's scientists feel that they need to conduct a second test then they should go ahead with it. Washington may not approve, but Indians will applaud. Prime Minister Rao will be doing his country more than one service by refusing to buckle under the American pressure — not only will he have stood by our scientists, he will also have reasserted the fact that India's policies are built on just one foundation — independence."

Bombay THE TIMES OF INDIA on 19 December carries a 485-word editorial on page 14 entitled: "Nuclear Apartheid."

It says: "The inspired reports in the US media about India's alleged plans to test a nuclear device is a diabolic attempt to at once isolate India in the run up to the conclusion of the consultations on the comprehensive test ban treaty (CTBT) and portray it as a source of instability in the region. Unfortunately, the arrogant and clumsy manner in which the Clinton administration has dealt with this country on this issue may push it into doing the exact opposite of what the US wants — go nuclear."

The editorial reviews India's "principled stand" on universal disarmament as well as the perceived reluctance of the nuclear powers to disarm and their willingness to "wink" at Pakistan's nuclear program. It says: "If CTBT is delinked from a verifiable and time-bound disarmament by the nuclear powers it will only perpetuate nuclear apartheid, dividing the world into nuclear haves and have-nots. There is no way in which any elected and patriotic government in India can allow this to happen."

The editorial concludes: "The US has refused to see that peace in the sub-continent has been maintained for over two decades thanks to India's uncompromising posture of nuclear ambivalence — of retaining the capacity to go nuclear without the intent to do so. It is a position that has won India acclaim from across the world, including from within the strategic policy community in the US. However, with the recent antics of the Clinton administration, especially of some irresponsible pro-Pakistani elements in the US State and Defence departments, the government of India is being coerced by public opinion to abandon the mature stance of nuclear ambiguity in favour of a declared nuclear status. It is not in India's interest to alter its current stance. And yet, the US pressure on CTBT, coming close on the heels of the extension of the discriminatory NPT [nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty], may reduce the options before the government. As public opinion polls and the reaction of all the opposition parties show, the government will come under increased domestic pressure to respond to the US blackmail with a second test. What is more, there will be pressure to weaponise and to induct the Agni missile into the defence forces. For the sake of peace and stability in this region the US must abandon the course set by the Clinton administration. If it persists with its present hypocritical stance and continues to exert pressure on India, the government may be left with no other option but to succumb to public opinion."

Delhi BUSINESS STANDARD on 19 December carries a 585-word editorial on page 11 entitled: "Not Now, Mr Rao." It asks whether India should follow France and the PRC in conducting a nuclear test: "Arguably, nuclear tests could do a power of good for India's national security in the wake of the indefinite extension of the discriminatory nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Yet India should desist. Anyone who thinks it could conduct a series of tests without paying an unaffordable price need only look at the outcry provoked by France's recent testing. And these are acknowledged nuclear powers which did not have to contend with the US throwing its weight against their testing programmes. A country which is not a formal nuclear power would

immediately attain the rogue status of the North Koreans and Iraqs of the world."

The editorial adds: "One test to make a statement of will would bring the world down on it like a ton of bricks. Indian interests could be affected on issues from Kashmir and human rights to investment and India's ambition for UN Security Council permanent membership. Machismo and paying a price could have a point if it aided India's nuclear potential. But the defence establishment is agreed that, in terms of concrete defence capability, one test will do nothing at all for India." It states: "A nuclear test would serve little purpose except aid Mr Rao's domestic popularity close to an election."

Viewing Indian security policy, the editorial suggests the country pursue its goals by using its leverage in the negotiations on the CTBT and fissile material treaty. It concludes: "Assessments of India's defence preparedness suggest that its current capabilities are a match for neighbouring Pakistan's, but not nearly good enough for other, larger challenges. It is imperative that India continues to develop longer-range delivery systems and facilitate research and development and testing of the systems required. It should go ahead with the serial production and induction of the Prithvi missile and with the further development of the Agni for induction. It is here that it should be prepared to take the heat, not on a nuclear test which could prove severely counter-productive at this time."

Hindi Editorials View Reports on Nuclear Test **BK2012030395**

[FBIS Editorial Report] Several Hindi-language Delhi dailies carry editorials on 18 December reacting to a report in THE NEW YORK TIMES that the U.S. Government believes India is preparing for a nuclear test at its Pokaran test site.

NAVBHARAT TIMES carries a 730-word editorial on page 6 entitled: "The Nuclear Fantasy." Rejecting the nuclear test report, it says THE NEW YORK TIMES "seems either trapped by the cock and bull stories published by the U.S. Administration or else has deliberately allowed itself to be used for some ulterior motive."

Continuing, the editorial notes: "When the U.S. Administration so liberally gave the information gathered by its spy satellites to the daily's defense correspondents and not its editor, it must have informed them that Pokaran is the site where the Indian Air Force conducts its practice sessions and related activities to keep its pilots in good trim. Surprisingly, though, the daily did not mention this fact. Had it done so, how it could have created

an international sensation by highlighting a palpably absurd and baseless story?"

The editorial claims the paper "is just a pawn," adding: "The villain is the United States, which is trying to strangle the nuclear options of countries like India and Iran in the noose of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)." It accuses the United States of seeking to use the CTBT to perpetuate its nuclear superiority. It claims that because President Clinton wants "to take advantage of this ban in the coming presidential election in his country, he is somewhat impatient." It calls on the United States to destroy its nuclear stockpile.

Viewing U.S. attempts to halt the spread of nuclear weapons while simultaneously providing weapons to Pakistan, the editorial concludes: "Looking toward its military concerns and the blatant tilt in the U.S. attitude toward Pakistan, India must follow the examples set by China and France."

JANSATTA carries a 610-word editorial on page 4 entitled: "The U.S. Warning." It says: "All of a sudden the United States has decided that India is going to conduct yet another nuclear test in Pokaran after a gap of about 20 years. This revelation dawned upon the U.S. President on the basis of fantastic information supplied by the CIA — the U.S. intelligence agency — that its spy satellites had detected unusual activity in Rajasthan's Pokaran region involving the movement of Indian security forces. Although this satellite surveillance could not reveal what caused this unusual activity, the United States quickly drew the conclusion that the Indian Government must be about to conduct another nuclear test in Pokaran." The editorial goes on to label the U.S. information as "false" and "haphazardly gathered."

Continuing, the editorial states: "What is interesting in this context is not the U.S. concern over India conducting a nuclear test but the implications for its beloved Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The Americans believe that any nuclear test conducted by any country will create hurdles in its attempt to disarm the world and completely stop nuclear proliferation. What is amazing is that when the nuclear countries — who are also signatories to the NPT [nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty] — conduct nuclear tests, the United States seems unconcerned, perhaps because they are honorable members of the Nuclear Club." Despite this, it says: "Washington quickly issued a warning to India when India has neither conducted a nuclear test nor expressed its intention of doing so in the near future. The United States seems to have been unnerved by normal military practice activities performed by the Indian security forces in Pokaran's empty stretch. Knavishly linking

such normal military activity in the region with the nuclear test conducted in Pokaran 20 years ago to confirm the technique of nuclear fission, the United States did not waste a second in issuing a statement blaming India on an absurd charge."

The editorial then cites perceived U.S. indifference to Pakistan's nuclear program, concluding: "Now, by shelving its own Pressler law, the United States has created an insecure atmosphere in this subcontinent. It has no moral right to create a furor over any of our activities, real or imaginary."

HINDUSTAN carries a 750-word editorial on page 6 entitled: "Coercive U.S. Tactics." It says THE NEW YORK TIMES report "appears to be part of a well-planned propaganda," adding: "Suffice it to say that the U.S. intelligence sources concocted imaginary stories to explain the activities they witnessed at Pokaran. Although the Indian Government quickly issued a clarification to say that its soldiers were performing routine exercises there, the question is whether the U.S. spy system is deliberately failing to give the U.S. Administration accurate and complete information or if its satellite surveillance has become incapable of gathering accurate information. This is not the real issue, however. Deeming a rope to be a snake has two possible explanations — either a genuine mistake or false propaganda to deliberately prove a rope to be a snake."

Reviewing Indian justifications of its nuclear program and its opposition to the NPT, the editorial says: "It appears the Clinton administration is possessed by an ardent wish to show the world and its own citizens that India does not have the courage to refuse its orders. When it realized that India could not be purchased through tempting offers, it started to adopt coercive tactics to pressure India. First it tried to vex India to no end on the Kashmir issue, and then by giving weapons to Pakistan it attempted to force India to kneel down for mercy and accept its demands."

Referring to Pakistan's nuclear program, it says the United States, "through its latest warning to India, is asserting that if India conducts a nuclear test then Pakistan will quickly follow suit. One possible reason for this uncalled for U.S. warning to India appears to be to give preemptive cover to Pakistan to conduct a nuclear test in the near future. Hence these false charges against India."

Referring to India's stand on the CTBT, the editorial says: "The Clinton administration wants wide acceptance of the CTBT by the middle of 1996 in order to derive maximum advantage of it during the coming U.S. presidential election. This could be another reason for

the Clinton administration's exerting this pressure. The general elections in India are around the corner, and it is uncertain what type of government will be formed after the elections or which Indian party will come to power."

Claiming that the U.S. has been "inactive" in response to PRC and French nuclear tests, the paper asks: "If it cannot keep them in control, why such a stern attitude toward India when we have not conducted any nuclear test? India has its own policy and it is firmly committed to it."

The editorial concludes: "India's keeping quiet at these false charges would not be proper at all. Whether President Clinton sends a letter or makes the U.S. ambassador issue a statement, India must boldly respond that it will neither cow down under pressure nor tolerate coercive tactics. In any event, the United States has lost its moral right to advise India on any issue after giving weapons to Pakistan."

Criticism of U.S. Role in Kashmir Viewed

BK2012043995 *Delhi INDIAN EXPRESS in English*
19 Dec 95 p 8

[Article by J.N. Dixit: "US Designs in J&K Cause for Chavan's Concern"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Home Minister, Mr. S.B. Chavan, has been suspicious and critical about US support to Pakistan and US motivations regarding Jammu and Kashmir [J&K] as well as about externally encouraged subversive activities in other parts of India. He had been consistent in his critical evaluation of US policies towards India even while we were structuring new equations with the US in the aftermath of the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

His criticism of the US on previous occasions resulted in apoplexy within the Indian Government while the US authorities viewed his opinion as an isolated voice which need not to be taken seriously. But this time his statement in Parliament has been taken serious note of and has created significant political ripples. The reason is that his concern was articulated within a week of Prime Minister Rao being critical of the Hank Brown amendment and its implications on Indo-US relations while addressing the Congress Parliamentary Party on November 29. Mr Chavan's statement in Parliament claiming knowledge about "evil designs" of the US in Jammu and Kashmir has resulted in a public perception that he was not expressing an autonomous view. This public perception acquired additional validity in the context of Mr Chavan stating in Parliament that what he had said about US policies was with a full sense of

responsibility. He made this remark when questioned by an MP whether he had consulted the Prime Minister and other Cabinet colleagues concerned before being critical of the US.

There are reasons for Mr Chavan's assertive and critical expression of Indian concern. The restoration of arms supplies to Pakistan under the Hank Brown amendment, which was fully endorsed by the Clinton administration, is perceived in India as a tilt towards Pakistan, regardless of the justification and rationalisation given by the US. The US giving a political signal of support to Pakistan through this step, while being aware of Pakistan's nuclear weapon status and its subversive activities in Jammu and Kashmir, naturally evokes Indian resentment. Additional events which have compounded the situation must be noted.

India had supplied substantive and detailed evidence of Pakistani involvement in violent terrorist activities in Jammu and Kashmir to the US State Department in 1992 and 1993. India had also sent a team of officials to back up this evidence by detailed briefings. The initial American response was that it might declare Pakistan a state supporting terrorism, though at the macro-level one was clear that the US would not do this. What was significant is that the US posed this threat to Pakistan not on the merits of the case but for its own political purposes to keep Pakistan in line to further its own geostrategic interests in South and West Asia.

One does not have to labour the pernicious impact of Ms Robin Raphel's statements on the legal aspects of the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India in terms which encouraged secessionist forces in Kashmir. Events over the last six months have only added to the negative perceptions about US policies on the State in political circles and in Indian public opinion. After the Al-Faraj took foreigners as hostages in July last, amongst whom there are Americans, the US Embassy reportedly utilised the access given to it to the State to negotiate the release of the Americans for extensive interaction with secessionist elements. Representatives of the rank of Counsellor and First Secretary from the political and consular sections of the US Embassy have not limited themselves to talking to the hostage-takers. They have undertaken general political discussions with successionist elements, advising them to resist elections.

There are reliable reports that when Ms Raphel met Dr Farooq Abdullah during her most recent visit to India, she told him to stick to the demand of the restoration of the pre-1953 political and constitutional relationship between Jammu and Kashmir and the Union of India. She reportedly assured him that the US Government will support him on this stance. The US

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State and other visiting US government figures have invariably been put in touch with Hurriyat leaders and other Kashmiri militants by the US Embassy.

When former US President George Bush visited India in the last week of November, he also had a meeting with Hurriyat leaders like Mr Shabir Shah. When questioned about these contacts being organised, US Embassy's reaction was that it wanted to facilitate the US leadership getting first-hand knowledge of the situation in Jammu and Kashmir. There are also reports that the US has been encouraging contacts between secessionist leaders of Jammu and Kashmir and leaders of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and their Pakistani controllers.

Despite worries about Islamic extremist domination of Afghanistan and despite being aware that elements of the Taleban and other Mujahideen along with their weaponry can be diverted to Jammu and Kashmir to exacerbate the situation there, the US authorities have not taken any strong steps to deter Pakistan from its military adventure in Afghanistan, which has security implications for India. Though the US disclaims any desire for a foothold in Afghanistan or Jammu and Kashmir, US research scholars and economic and strategic analysts have given the assessment that if the US wishes to have economic access to Central Asia, the most effective land route would be through Jammu and Kashmir and through portions of Afghanistan.

If we take note of this view, in the context of US policy objectives in Central Asia, stated by persons like Dr Kissinger, the inescapable conclusion is that the US would like to take advantage of the centrifugal political trends in Jammu and Kashmir and Afghanistan to further its own interests regardless of the impact on India's territorial integrity or security.

So our Home Minister's clear critical expression of concern about US policies on Jammu and Kashmir has a valid basis. US Embassy describing his statement as "without any basis" or as "nonsense" is both obfuscatory and arrogant. It is also bad diplomacy, given many areas of constructive cooperation between India and the US which remain possible in the changed international situation.

Having said this, the question to be answered is whether our reaction should be confrontational towards the US. There have been two countries which adopted an attitude of assertive confrontation with the US till the early 1970s — China and Albania; to some extent, North Korea also had the same attitude. They took this posture when the cold war was still on and when they had the leverage of the Soviet Union even more than what India

ever had. But today, despite differences of opinion and divergence of interests, the global trend is to maintain equilibrium and sustain stable relations to the extent possible even if there are reasons for tension and basic differences of opinion on some issues.

Those amongst our political analysts and commentators who are being highly critical of the Rao Government, accusing it of succumbing to US pressure and progressively becoming a client state, I am afraid, consider emotive nationalistic jingoism to be a substitute for a sober and practical foreign policy. India has to have reasonable equations with all countries, especially with the politically and economically powerful countries, to sustain its economic development, which in turn is an imperative for maintaining our stability, unity and territorial integrity. A negative relationship with the US will have a ripple effect on the attitude of other important countries stretching from ASEAN to Western Europe, which will affect their inclination to have contentful relations with India.

There is a school of thought that Mr Chavan's forthright criticism is basically a pre-election stance. Even if this is so, the political signal which he conveyed to the US was both timely and necessary. But relations between States are never a unidimensional phenomenon. Given the importance and relevance in maintaining Indo-US cooperation in the economic and technological fields and given the relevance of expanding political and security cooperation with the US to the extent feasible, confrontationist oscillations in our policies are not advisable.

Rao Calls Upon SAARC To Eliminate Poverty

*BK1812095995 Delhi All India Radio Network
in English 0830 GMT 18 Dec 95*

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The commemorative session of foreign ministers of SAARC [South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation] has voiced its firm resolve to eliminate poverty and move toward free trade in the region in the coming decade.

The prime minister, Mr. Narasimha Rao, who inaugurated the session on the 10th anniversary of the group set the tone and tenor of the deliberations by calling for all efforts to face the core challenge of poverty. He said the task of providing a decent standard of living to the people should be achieved in the shortest possible time both nationally and collectively. The member nations of SAARC have already indicated the urgency they attach to the problem by agreeing to the target of poverty eradication by the year 2002. Mr. Rao, however, cautioned against any model of development based on uneven rewards. He said the benefit of economic liberalization and

social progress should be shared by all and the people of the lowest end cannot be made spectators to the enjoyment of the fruits of progress. Describing the South Asia Preferential Trade Arrangement, SAPTA, as a historic step, Mr. Rao called for commitment by all toward a freer flow of trade in the region.

The external affairs minister, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, said SAPTA will enable the SAARC to effectively respond to the fast changing world economic scenario. He called for total commitment to realize South Asian Free Trade Area by the turn of the century. The foreign ministers of Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Maldives, Nepal, and Bhutan also addressed the session.

Proposal for Bilateral Issues at SAARC Opposed

*BK2012070695 Delhi Doordarshan Television
Network in English 1530 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The external affairs minister, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, said today that India would not agree to a proposal for bringing bilateral issues into the SAARC forum. Talking to newsmen in New Delhi today, Mr. Mukherjee said Article-10 of the charter of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation — SAARC — was deliberately drafted as the forum should not be bogged down on bilateral issues. He said such views were expressed earlier also but, there was no demand for amending the SAARC charter.

SAARC Urged To Avoid Contentious Issues

*BK2012120395 Delhi All India Radio General
Overseas Service in English 1010 GMT 20 Dec 95*

[Commentary by Arun Kumar, editor of the PRESS TRUST OF INDIA]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Ten years is not a long time in the life of institutions, yet the seven-nation South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, SAARC, has reason to be satisfied with what it has achieved in the first decade of its existence. Meeting in Dhaka on 8 December 1985, leaders of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka opened up a vast new frontier. Bound as the countries of the region are by ties of history and culture, the leaders laid stress on what united them rather than what divided them. Conscious that in an increasingly interdependent world, good-neighborliness and meaningful cooperation were essential to improve the lives of their people, they called for joint action to resolve their common problems, interests and aspirations. But, cooperation among members does not preclude the other bilateral or multilateral contacts, for SAARC is not conceived as a super state but as an association based on the principle

of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, and political independence.

Again conscious that contentious bilateral issues between members cast a shadow on regional cooperation, the founding leaders of SAARC decided to keep them out of the SAARC forum. The SAARC envisaged resolution of existing and emerging bilateral issues on a parallel course with multinational cooperation. As Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao noted at the just-concluded commemorative session of SAARC foreign ministers in New Delhi, there were numerous reservations about the working of SAARC when it was launched a decade back. Quote, ten years down the road all vestiges of doubts have been erased, unquote, said Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao describing the South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement, SAPTA, which became operational on 7 December as historic. He called upon member states to speed up free flow of trade and strengthen economic ties in a spirit of enlightened collective regional self-interest to uplift some of the world's poorest nations.

Now that SAPTA has got going, SAARC nations should aim to create a South Asian free trade area, SAFTA, even before the turn of the century, India proposed. Suggesting that they should now endeavor to have zero or minimal tariffs for most products, External Affairs Minister Mr. Pranab Mukherjee sought removal of most quantitative restrictions. SAFTA will produce a common market of over a billion people; and that in itself will make the rest of world sit up, he said. Foreign ministers of all the seven nations proposed various measures to progressively dismantle all the remaining trade barriers.

Before SAPTA, SAARC nations had identified 12 critical areas of development with technical committees meeting often to spur cooperation. The identified areas are agriculture, communication, education and culture, environment, health and population activities, meteorology, prevention of drug trafficking and abuse, rural development, science and technology, tourism, transport, and women in development. SAARC institutional framework was strengthened with the establishment in 1987 of a permanent SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu. Foreign ministers of SAARC nations meet at least twice a year and heads of state and government hold annual summits. Other notable SAARC achievements include the establishment of SAARC food security reserve and the regional convention on suppression of terrorism, both in 1988; and regional conventional on narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in 1990.

Bilateral relations between various SAARC nations, too, have witnessed tremendous improvement in the last

decade. Yet, a few countries, like Pakistan, wish to bring in what Bhutan called popular domestic politics of neighbor bashing to SAARC. But, a majority of SAARC members, including India, see wisdom in the original decision to keep out bilateral matters, as these contentious issues could well upset the cooperation cart. After having come this far, it would be a folly to let a few divisive issues kill SAARC.

'Pakistan-Trained Militants' Killed in Kashmir

BK2012041595 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0245 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In Jammu and Kashmir, anti-Pakistani demonstrations were held yesterday in a number of border villages in (Falwanadi) sector. Five Pakistan-trained militants were killed in two encounters with the security forces near the Line of Control in the last two days in this sector. An Army spokesman told newsmen in Palamwala that security all along the border has been tightened.

Sophisticated Arms Search Intensifies in Bengal

BK2012034295 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0245 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In West Bengal, search operation for sophisticated arms has been intensified in 10 villages under Jhalda and Jaipur police stations in Purulia District. At least 112 AK-47 rifles, rocket launchers, and a large quantity of ammunition were recovered from these villages. The Purulia District Superintendent of Police, Mr. Vijayakumar, told our Ranchi correspondent that the IG [Inspector General], Police, Western Zone, and the IG, CID [Criminal Investigation Department] have reached the site and are supervising the combing operation in the area.

According to the police, at least 30 large boxes containing sophisticated arms were dropped from an aircraft on Sunday [17 December] night over the villages Deradi, Kinnady, and Katanda. A case has been registered against an unidentified person in this connection. The district and interstate borders have been sealed and police patrolling has been intensified.

Iran

Khamene'i Addresses Heads of Branches of Government

LD2012125395 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 1030 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] On the occasion of the joyful anniversary of the prophetic mission of Islam's holy

prophet, the heads of the three branches of government, departmental staff, and officials of the Islamic system were received by the esteemed leader of the Islamic revolution and the Guardian of the Cause of Muslims to offer their congratulations on the occasion of the great Mab'ath [prophetic mission] feast.

The eminent leader, for his part, congratulated the great Islamic ummah, especially the religious people of Iran, on this joyous occasion. [passage omitted]

The eminent leader praised the Muslim people of Iran's commitment to divine and spiritual values and their appreciation for the work being done by the system's officials to achieve social justice. He graciously said:

[Begin Khamene'i recording] Many people are astonished at how the Islamic Republic of Iran resisted being harmed by the two superpowers in the days when there were two superpowers. Now that one of them has disintegrated, leaving only the other — the latter and its allies — developed governments, as well as those who support America out of humility and abjectness, are all trying, together, to inflict effective blows on the Islamic Republic. They are not succeeding. [Chants of: "God is Great," "Khamene'i is the leader," "Death to the opponents of the velayat-e faqih," "Death to America," "Death to Britain," "Death to the monafeqin [hypocrites; Mojahedin-e Khalq] and Saddam," "Death to Israel."]

The secret of this is the people's faith, their commitment to religion, the attention they pay to spiritual values in their lives, and the feeling that their society's system is moving toward the establishment of justice. These are the reasons. [end recording]

His Eminence Ayatollah Khamene'i described the latest American threats as vulgar, cheap, and frivolous, adding:

[Begin Khamene'i recording] As far as world public opinion is concerned, they are doing all the wrong and unacceptable things. They ask for irrelevant things, they propose that the Congress should allocate funds for the purposes of activities involving sabotage against the Islamic Republic's system. Have they not been doing exactly this up to now? Have your mercenary saboteurs not yet felt the steel-fisted blows of the Iranian people that they should want to test these again? Quite obviously, the people of Iran and the Islamic Republic's system will, at any point they feel that the mercenary fingertips of the Americans or any other aggressive powers are busy with their activities inside the country, they will confront them in a decisive and crushing manner. [chants of: "God is great," "Khamene'i is the leader," "Death to the opponents of the velayat-e faqih," "Death to America," "Death to Britain," "Death

to the monafeqin and Saddam," "Death to Israel."] [end recording]

Deputy Minister Comments on Dayton Peace Accords

LD1912154595 Tehran IRNA in English
1515 GMT 19 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Dec. 19, IRNA — The Iranian deputy foreign minister for communications, Morteza Sarmadi, in an exclusive interview with the English-language daily TEHRAN TIMES said, "there are certain warmongers in Bosnia-like the Bosnian Serbs who would challenge the commitment of the United States and the NATO to the Dayton peace accord."

He said, if the U.S. Government has sponsored the Bosnian peace to gain a ground in the next year's presidential elections, it will inevitably withdraw its forces in the face of an actual threat from the Serbs. This will put the U.S. commitment to Bosnian peace into the test," the deputy foreign minister added.

Sarmadi briefing the daily on his recent visit to Croatia, Bosnia, Albania and Austria, said that the main objective behind his trip was to assess the effect of the peace accord on the Bosnian and the Croatian officials.

[Word indistinct] situation of the Balkan, expressing Iran's solidarity with the Bosnian people and government during the reconstruction of that country and also to boost the trilateral cooperation among Iran, Bosnia and Croatia were among the other objectives of his visit to those countries, he added.

"Both the Bosnian and Croatian officials, especially Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic termed the Dayton peace accord unjust, but the only alternative to the cessation of suffering," disclosed the deputy minister.

Sarmadi expressed concern over the peace accord terming it as unjust and added that the rights of the Bosnian Muslims have been ignored and the fate of the war criminals has been left in ambiguity.

He said the Islamic Republic of Iran respects the decision of the Bosnian people and government in accepting the peace accord but Iran will not miss any opportunity in attracting the world's attention towards the reconstruction of Bosnia.

The official disclosed that the Islamic Contact Group, in its recent meeting in Tehran, decided to assist the Bosnian people in reconstruction of their homeland.

He added that the Albanian officials were also dissatisfied with the peace accord.

According to Sarmadi, the Albanian officials were interested in expansion of their economic ties with Iran particularly in the oil sector.

Iran set up an agriculture services center and a medical center in Tirana two years ago. The Albanian authorities expressed satisfaction over the performance of the centers, Sarmadi added.

Sarmadi further disclosed that the Albanian foreign minister is to pay an official visit to Tehran upon invitation of the Iranian Foreign Minister, 'Ali Akbar Velayati.

He described his recent visit to Austria quite fruitful saying that he discussed the future and reconstruction of Bosnia-Herzegovina with the high-ranking Austrian officials.

During his stay in Austria, Sarmadi, also met with the theological Austrian officials and discussed the Islam-Christianity dialogue with them in order to find a common ground between the two religions towards a lasting peace in the world.

On Middle East peace process, Sarmadi said, although there are lot of publicity about peace in the Middle East, it is at the level of the governments of some of the regional countries with Israel and has not received any support in those countries at national level. "A full and lasting peace depends on a nations' will. Upon being disappointed in not obtaining all the land it wants, Israel, with the support of the U.S., wants to gain economic domination over the region".

Sairi Head on Iraq Ties, Saddam Son-in-Law, Kurds

*LD1912164095 Tehran IRNA in English
1525 GMT 19 Dec 95*

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Dec. 19, IRNA — "Iraq's future relations with regional countries should be based on good neighborliness and cooperation for joint interests," head of the Supreme Assembly of Islamic Revolution of Iraq (Sairi) Ayatollah Seyyed Mohammad Baqir Hakim has said.

In an interview with the morning English-language newspaper, "IRAN NEWS", Ayatollah Hakim said that as developments in Iraq are inextricably linked with the region's security, all regional states pay serious attention to Iraq.

The Sairi, he noted, has relations with most countries and believes that their interests will be secured when they adopt stances based on non-interference in Iraq's domestic affairs and confidence in and support for the Iraqi people's struggles.

On the possibility of cooperation with Saddam's son-in-law Husayn Kamel Hassan, he said, "We have time and again underscored that we have our own programs and have not had any contact or cooperation with him, and in general the Iraqi opposition holds a negative stance toward this person due to his background."

Referring to the U.S. plan for power-sharing among the Kurds, the Shias, and the Sunni personnel of the armed [word indistinct], he said if the Iraqi people are to have a fundamental role in power, the Shias, the Kurds (be they Shias or Sunni), and the Turks should be power-sharers.

If all these groups share power in Iraq, the country's unity and power will be retained, he emphasized.

"So if what we have in mind is accounted for in the said plan, it can be beneficial," he said adding, "of course, we have to realize their true objective and then express views about the plan."

Hakim stressed that power should not be in the hands of a minority as it will lead to oppression and suppression of other groups and gradually to getting donations from foreign countries.

He marked that the differences between the Kurdistan democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) have inflicted losses on the interests of the Kurds.

"Due to the Sairi's close relations with these two groups and with the Muslim Kurds of Iraq, we have had a great deal of contact with both groups and we have offered a plan which stresses that peace should have several stages," Hakim added.

The both groups warmly welcomed the plan and the efforts made so far have been fruitful so much so that a cease-fire is presently holding between the two, he noted.

Hakim said that they have failed to establish peace because of the interference of some foreign countries which intend to gain their special interests and added that such interference would adversely affect the peace process.

On the frosty relations between King Husayn of Jordan and Saddam, he said, "I do not have precise information about the major reason behind King Husayn's changed stance vis-a-vis Iraq."

On the whole, this changed stance is in tune with Sairi's major objective to transform Iraq's domestic conditions and liberate it from Saddam's rule, he made it clear.

Possibly, this change in stance is not permanent, since it is adopted now that Iraq's domestic situation is not very promising, Hakim noted.

The Sairi head maintained that due to his proximity with Iraq's ruling system, King Husayn has decided to adopt a stance that would insure Jordan's future ties with Iraq which he believes should be consolidated in case any transformations take place there.

On the fate of the Iraqi regime, Hakim said, "we believe that the regime will collapse, and this is a general view inside Iraq."

Several groups are currently active in Iraq, he said and enumerated them as those who believe that Iraq's future should be determined by the people and call for justice, equality, territorial integrity, and good neighborliness.

Another group call for superficial changes in the country's political conditions and opt for unrest in the region to gain their special interest, he said and added that this group is led by the U.S.

Court Sentences Sheykh To 'Imprisonment in Exile'
LD1912073295 Tehran IRNA in English
0622 GMT 19 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Dec. 19, IRNA — The special court of the clergy sentenced Sheykh 'Ali Tehrani to 20 years of imprisonment in exile, reported a daily today. The Persian-language daily 'IRAN' quoted an official as saying that the fourth branch of the special court of the clergy recognized Sheykh 'Ali Tehrani, 70, as "warring with God".

He disclosed that the shaykh was charged with collaboration with the Iraqi regime during the imposed war and with cooperation with the terrorist Mujahedeen Khalq organization (MKO) [Mojahedin-e Khalq].

Regarding the sentence that was handed down by the court, the official said the reason for this verdict was the advanced age of the defendant. Sheykh 'Ali Tehrani carried out an anti-Iran propaganda campaign during the Iraqi-imposed war throughout his more than ten years of stay in Iraq.

It was announced in June that Sheykh 'Ali Tehrani, repentant of his deeds, has crossed the Iran-Iraq border and submitted himself to Iranian officials at one of the Islamic republic's outposts.

Islamic Jihad Member Criticizes Autonomous Government

NC1712062895 Tehran ETTELA'AT in Persian
5 Dec 95 p 12

[Third part of a five-part interview with Islamic Jihad Movement member Muhammad Abu-Jihad by unidentified correspondent; place and date not given]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] [ET-TELA'AT] What is your assessment of the Palestinian autonomy since its inception?

[Abu-Jihad] In addition to what I have said already, I should state the security apparatus in the West Bank and Gaza Strip has acted in such a manner that, even before the new array of Zionist forces, the people were more apprehensive. In Jericho, their attitude has been such that the people are gripped with fear. This autonomous government calls itself a national government but what national government opens fire on its own people? By firing on their own people, they have belied the concept of a national government.

The people do not consider Yasir 'Arafat their representative as nothing has changed for them. As in the past, they face imprisonment. The economic situation is the same with 60 percent unemployment and an inflation rate of more than 100 percent. The plethora of rampant problems includes corruption, bribery, oppression of the people for economic ends, total infrastructural damage and so on.

In fact, on the economic plane there are no signs of any economic infrastructure and efforts are only being made to develop tourism on the Mediterranean coast by 'Arafat and his close associates, or those in the autonomous government who are furthering their own ulterior motives. There is absolutely no legislation for the utilization of the assistance given by other countries.

Where does the capital go? It goes into the pockets of certain groups which are either affiliated with the government or its faction. No economic system geared to a future outlook of growth is in evidence. Everything has been destroyed in the Gaza Strip except for security, that has become even more inflated. Thus it can be said that the Gaza Strip has become one large prison which is doomed to accept the guardianship of the security apparatus. [passage omitted]

Comments on Reasons for Tension

NC1612174095 *Tehran ETTELA'AT in Persian*
7 Dec 95 p 12

[Fourth part of five-part interview with Islamic Jihad Movement member Muhammad Abu-Jihad by unidentified correspondent; place and date not given]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] [ET-TELA'AT] The prevailing regional conditions at present differ vastly from 20 years ago. The PLO and Israel have officially recognized one another after a short round of peace talks. Most of the Arab countries have signed a peace accord with Israel or will do so shortly. It appears that in such circumstances, struggle against Israel as a despotic usurper has become more difficult than it was a few years ago. What kind of thinking would assume power and leadership of the struggle against Zionism and the usurper Jerusalem regime?

[Abu-Jihad] First of all, when we speak of the gains of the Zionist regime on the actual scene and the fact that Israel is gaining benefits almost daily, whether in the form of direct talks, direct or indirect economic relations, or security agreements with a clique of Arab governments, or by propounding fundamentalism as a danger, we believe that it is certainly not out of concern for the establishment of the necessary stability in the region for which there are many reasons.

The first reason is that the actual problem is not an economic one. The fact that the people in Palestine are engaged in a struggle and jihad is not because their economic condition is weak or non-existent. Those who fight in southern Lebanon are not doing so for economic reasons either, despite regional government views attributing regional instability to economic reasons. The real reason is political which is a proven fact, but in what form? The fact is that a nation of Palestinians is under a usurper and despotic regime.

This is the identifiable problem in the region. If the Palestinian people's full rights are given to them, the political problem will end. If this is not done, the problem will continue. This does not concern only 2 million Palestinians in the occupied territories, but 6 million Palestinians. Hence the difficulty is a political one and any amount of economic planning will not resolve it.

The second reason is that the peace that is taking shape is not being forged with nations, but by the officials and governments with the Zionist entity. [passage omitted]

The third reason is that Israel is drawing up a map of the region on the pretext of peace talks. Israel is currently equipped with weapons of mass destruction, as well as

nuclear power. So how can peace be established when Israel is one huge arsenal? How is it possible that the region will witness peace when all mass destruction weapons are solely in Israel's power and can only generate an arms race in the region. The Middle East region is considered one of the largest arenas of the arms race which has generated tension in the region. Hence the factors which cause tension continue in this region.

However, with regard to the future, and the future relations, one may state that we believe in our nation being alive. Nations can be subjected to tyranny, their freedom may be wrested, they may be decimated, but this may only be for a specific period of time; they can never be annihilated completely. History proves that nations can never be destroyed. Now we perceive in the balances of history that if people are bogged down and cannot forge ahead it does not mean that they are finished. [passage omitted]

The Palestinian people are considered fundamentalists even though they are merely struggling for the vindication of their rights. The Islamic Republic of Iran which is also opposed to Zionist domination in the Middle East is also labeled fundamentalist. Thus on the material plane we are witnessing the emergence of certain disruptions in balances; however we have certain elements which we should safeguard in our struggle.

I believe that resistance has two dimensions, material as well as moral. The material dimension is concerned with carrying weapons while the moral dimension embodies the spirit and values of resistance. It is possible that I may carry weapons but be totally shattered which would mean that the enemy would be able to break the resistance. Our enemy wants to create deceptive conditions so that the regional nations are lulled into a false sense of security in order to erode the spirit of resistance from within. We should combat this conspiracy so that the resistance remains alive within.

Law Enforcement, Military Violations To Be Investigated

NC1612153195 *Tehran JOMHURI-YE ESLAMI*
in Persian 12 Dec 95 p 4

[Report by IRNA in Zanjan]

[FBIS Translated Text] Engineer Qanbar, the Zanjan deputy governor for Administrative and Financial Planning stated: The first departments of the civil courts of the provincial centers have been assigned to investigate violations by the military and law enforcement officials during the fifth Majles elections.

Eng. Qanbari added: This circular endorses the earlier directive by the executive deputy and the judiciary head

on the basis of Article 17 of the electoral laws of the Islamic Majles and has been issued and disseminated to the executive apparatus of the province.

Rome Embassy Denies Threats to Italian Journalist
LD1612105495 Tehran IRNA in Persian
0706 GMT 16 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Tehran, 16 December — The Iranian Embassy in Rome has rejected an Italian newspaper report which claimed that Iran has threatened to kill an Italian journalist.

Enrico Maria Ferrari, a correspondent of the travel magazine 'VIAGGI', in an article recently claimed that the Iranian people did not support the government, that there was no freedom of press and that there were few women who wore the chador in Iran.

The daily 'IL GIORNALE' used the above to claim that his life had been threatened and that because of insulting Islam, Ferrari would hang from Islamic gallows.

The embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Rome in a reply to the newspaper article denied the allegations and added that criticizing Iran politically did not constitute insulting Islam and Muslims and that most probably, certain people wanted to either play a joke on the journalist or harm the good political and economic relations between Iran and Italy.

The Iranian Embassy in its reply pointed to the numerous visits of Italian journalists to Tehran in order to report on political, social, economic and cultural issues in Iran and added: Since the journalist in question in his ['Viaggi'] article has demonstrated his dislike for Salman Rushdie and proved that he respects the culture and beliefs of all Muslims, he is welcome to travel to Iran again any time he likes.

Commentary on UN Human Rights Rapporteur's Visit

LD1912172595 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in English 1130 GMT 19 Dec 95

[Unattributed commentary]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Iranian foreign minister, Dr. 'Ali Akbar Velayati, met and conferred with Mr. Abdul Fattah Amor, the special rapporteur of the UN Human Rights Commission, concerning religious affairs, here in Tehran on yesterday 18 December.

Iran's top diplomat in the dialogue shed light on the current situation of religious minorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is noteworthy that this is the first visit of a senior human rights official of Iran since 1991. The trip of the special human rights envoy

to Tehran and meetings schedule between him and various Iranian representatives of religious minorities is indicative of Iran's willingness for due cooperation with the United Nations for helping this international body obtain authentic data and realize the facts of Iranian society.

Since 1991 to date, the various reports of the Human Right Commission have been totally based on merely claims and allegations of multifarious grouplets opposing the Islamic system of Tehran aired from abroad. A cursory look at Iran's history speaks of this fact that the true followers of various divine faiths and religions in Iran have always enjoyed an ambience of sincerity, joy and peace with their Muslims compatriots and have constantly had equal rights and social privileges.

In the wake of the Iranian Islamic Revolution's culmination, the need for a more detailed recognition and observance of individual rights of Iranian members of religious minorities was greatly honored and heeded.

The Iranian senior diplomats in his talks with the special rapporteur of the UN Human Rights Commission here in Tehran underlined this vary fact and remarked: Islamic law and the Iranian Constitution have basically favored and supported the various aspects of religious rights in Iran. For instance the Iranian Jewish minorities, despite the fact that their number does not exceed 30,000, enjoy a deputy in the Iranian Islamic Consultative Assembly, who is accorded the liberty to freely express his views and ideas regarding diverse national issues, just like his Muslim representatives.

This is, however, at a time when in certain so-called democratic western societies, in spite of the existence of a couple of million Muslims in their communities, not only [as heard] a single representative do these Muslims have in any of their assemblies or parliamentary bodies. Such countries as Britain and France are vivid examples of this type of unfair attitude prevalent in western societies. There is basically no doubt that at present the issue of human rights has become an effective pressure leverage in the hands of so-called powerful nations. The issuance of repetitious resolutions as to the blatant violation of human rights in Islamic Iran, however, is technically from this vary source.

Any how it is expected that the current visit of the special rapporteur of the UN Human Rights Commission from Tehran may clearly depict the true status and rights enjoyed by various Iranian religious minorities away from the tense and tarnishes of western political pressures and malice.

**Rezvani: UN Draft Human Rights Resolution
'Baseless'***LD1412100295 Tehran IRNA in English
0832 GMT 14 Dec 95*

[FBIS Transcribed Text] United Nations, New York, Dec. 14, IRNA — Iran's Representative to the third committee of the 50th session of the United Nations General Assembly Seyed Hossein Rezvani here Wednesday [13 December] dismissed as "baseless and irrelevant" the draft resolution on "situation of human rights in Islamic Republic of Iran."

Rezvani said that once again, Iranian officials regretably were witnessing an attempt by certain quarters to politicize the third committee through adoption of another one-sided resolution against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

He added that in clear deviation from the normal and traditional exercise of United Nations, and vivid demonstration of political motives of the co-sponsors, the draft bases itself primarily upon the information contained in an absolutely out-dated, pre-consumed and technically invalid report of the former special representative.

The report, he added, was in fact a compilation of 106 cases of unsubstantiated claims and allegations out of which 53 cases have been duly investigated, clarified and properly responded to and the remaining cases are still under investigation for which Iranian officials were waiting for further information.

Elsewhere in the message, Rezvani said that Iran was confident that the member states including the sponsors of that resolution accept that the question of assassination outside Iran had no relation with the political theories and fictions whose negative influence were clearly evident in that matter.

He added that from judicial point of view, however, there existed no single substantiated evidence to support that outdated allegation dating back to almost three years ago and even before.

The Iranian official said that this came in a situation where the Iranian diplomats had been subjected to the atrocious terrorist acts in some countries whose cases were totally condoned by the western countries.

"A clear example of such an instance may be referred to the assassination attempt directed against charge d'affaires of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Buenos Aires on October 21, 1995," announced Rezvani.

He said that the sponsors of the draft resolution had done their utmost not to spare any occasion in keeping the negative concepts, no matter how old and outdated

they were, with the aim of making the old structure intact to depict superficially a distorted image of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

"Yet more interesting and astonishing observation in this regard is the bitter fact that amongst the co-sponsors there are those such as Israel who themselves are the perpetrators of the most inhuman, gross, massive and systematic violations of human rights, and about whom there are voluminous documented reports including United Nations documents bearing witness to their decades old and ongoing atrocities against human person and humanity as a whole."

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is in a position to challenge the allegations, whatsoever, case by case to demonstrate their absurdity and baselessness in a way that would nullify the 'raison d'être' of the continued international monitoring of the situation in my country," said the envoy.

Regarding the rights of minorities such as Christians in Iran, he added, Iranian officials took pride indeed that the Iranian territory was secure for Christian minority, as the co-existence among the Muslims and Christians dated back to the past tens of centuries.

The assassination of three Christian ministers can in no way distort this bright history. Even in this case, the government availed itself of every opportunity to remedy the situation and bring perpetrators of these murders to justice, he continued.

He said that regarding the Satanic Verses, it seemed that the European Union had confused the premise in that affair. He added that based upon international law and the relevant provisions of international covenant on civil and political rights as well as the constitutional laws of considerable number of countries including some European states Rushdie was an "offender."

Rezvani said that it was regrettable that the European countries in a blatant disregard to the international law and their own jurisprudence had praised Rushdie by various means and welcomed, with a red carpet, an individual whose insult to a divine religion had caused the death of more than one hundred people in some countries, let alone to bring him to justice.

Furthermore, it should be reiterated that it was not only Iran that had reacted to that outrageous insult by Rushdie, but all Islamic countries worldwide. In that regard, the relevant paragraph in the resolution adopted by the 18th ministerial meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference strongly condemned the blasphemous book the "Satanic Verses."

The Iranian official underlined that the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran was abided by its obligations under the international law and differentiated its responsibility thereupon and a religious ruling as an expert opinion.

He said that his delegation would vote against the draft resolution, calling on the member states to reject the exploitations of human rights question for the political ends and likewise vote against the draft resolution.

Foreign Exchange Stabilization by Central Bank Discussed

96LA0039A *Tehran PAYAM-E EMRUZ in Persian*
Aug-Sep 95 pp 27-29

[Interview with Dr. Mohammad Hashem Pesaran by unidentified correspondent; place and date not given — first two paragraphs are PAYAM-E EMRUZ introduction]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The government's new foreign exchange policy is under continuous evaluation in several respects. Some are looking at the basic exchange rate of 300 tumans per U.S. dollar. Some believe that this rate has no scientific foundation and that the 450-tuman rate announced previously by the Central Bank is more nearly workable. Some are doubtful that the Central Bank has the ability to make the market prosperous again by obtaining the foreign exchange needed for imports, and there are other issues. It is clear, however, that the new policy ended a period that had beset the economy like a tornado. Can this policy be continued? This is the most important question, but it is not the only question.

In an interview with PAYAM-E EMRUZ, Dr. Mohammad Hashem Pesaran answered questions on this subject. He is sometimes hopeful, sometimes anxious. He emphasizes policies that can endure, and ultimately believes that measures must be adopted—which are not that readily available—as procedures for allaying crisis, day-to-day coping and policy fluctuations.

[PAYAM-E EMRUZ] Dr., can the foreign exchange rate be kept stable until the end of the year [20 March 1996]?

[Pesaran] Keeping the foreign exchange rate stable artificially is easier to do if the time for doing it is as short as possible. However, controlling the foreign exchange rate depends on the government's ability to anchor inflation, and, especially in the relatively long term, it depends on the volume of currency in circulation. As long as this work is not done, one cannot hope to stabilize the foreign exchange rate.

[PAYAM-E EMRUZ] What is the most important factor in setting the foreign exchange rate?

[Pesaran] It is supply and demand that set the foreign exchange rate. The supply of foreign exchange in Iran basically depends on the nation's oil revenues, and that in turn follows world price fluctuations. The other important factors are: government policies on credits, expenses and the monetary and banking system and how this monetary and banking system conforms to the government's financial policies.

In the last few years, when the economic adjustment policy was being implemented, the nation's currency in circulation was not being controlled as needed. This exacerbated the inflation caused by the economic adjustment. The increase in the rate of inflation and its expected continuation was another factor in the weakening of the rial.

[PAYAM-E EMRUZ] Were there any other factors in the increase in the foreign exchange rate, other than inflation and the volume of currency in circulation?

[Pesaran] Stabilizing the foreign exchange rate, in addition to foreign factors such as the price of oil, also depends on domestic factors, especially the amount of credits the people have for government policies. One must know how those who have their fingers on the pulse of the market and foreign trade evaluate the government's policies, and what policies the government is implementing to convince them that the foreign exchange rate should remain stable.

However, in view of the fact that not all of the factors for controlling inflation are under the control of governments, the claim that governments can keep the foreign exchange rate stable at whatever level they wish is not realistic. For example, if the world price of oil decreases 20 percent, the government's revenue will decrease, and inevitably, with the change in the policy on imports, this will consequently decrease economic activity.

[PAYAM-E EMRUZ] Meaning that it is impossible to stabilize the foreign exchange rate?

[Pesaran] It is not impossible, but there are costs of doing this, and it demands its own special procedure. One way is to reduce imports and services, which is the same thing that was done in the last three months, and since then foreign trade has practically gone into stagnation.

[PAYAM-E EMRUZ] There is no doubt, however, that continued stagnation of the nation's industries will cause problems.

[Pesaran] Yes, and following that unemployment will also increase and then there will be other social problems. The government will therefore have no choice but to resort to policies that restrict imports. This adjustment in turn will further weaken the rial unless the government and the Central Bank can use financial and monetary tools to control the level of currency in circulation.

Crisis Era Policy

[PAYAM-E EMRUZ] It thus appears that we are moving in a closed circle.

[Pesaran] One side of the coin is this very closed circle to which you refer, but the other side is that if the government does not implement such strict policies to control foreign trade and the foreign exchange rate, then it is likely that the foreign exchange rate will go even higher and cause more inflation. Consequently, investment and its goals will be disrupted. In reality, the current policy is not an organized and comprehensive economic policy, it is a kind of crisis management. The essence of crisis management policies is that they are short-term and usually lack a firm foundation. They have most often been implemented out of necessity.

[PAYAM-E EMRUZ] How long can this procedure be continued?

[Pesaran] First one must know how much raw material the producers have in reserve.

[PAYAM-E EMRUZ] Industrialists are saying that they have shortages.

[Pesaran] In this case, the government may be able to permit some goods to come into the country for another two or three months or set priorities for importing goods, but this in itself will cause a new kind of paper-shuffling. At the same time some industrialists who are more powerful politically will have more possibility of using resources. This in turn will cause more disruption in the distribution of limited foreign exchange resources in the various economic sectors.

The next issue is the nation's foreign debt, which must be rescheduled again. Some of these loans were taken from banking consortiums, and as far as I know these consortiums include one or two U.S. banks. In view of the embargo policy the Americans have adopted with regard to Iran, these banks will not allow transactions with Iran. This is a very important issue, and my guess is that this is what is of concern to the Central Bank.

Setting True Foreign Exchange Rate

[PAYAM-E EMRUZ] During Ordibehesht [21 April - 21 May] the National Bank announced that the rate

for each export dollar is 442.5 tumans. This created an important shock in the market. Less than one month later, the Central Bank set the rate for the dollar at 300 tumans. Do you think the real value of the dollar is 300 tumans or something else?

[Pesaran] To determine the true rate for the dollar, one must first know at what time the foreign exchange rate was last in a state of equilibrium, and make that the basis. Then by adding the difference between domestic inflation and inflation outside the country, one can arrive at the true figure. Unfortunately, since that base equilibrium rate is not available, one cannot give an exact opinion about the true present value. One point is clear, however: if foreign exchange revenues are reduced, the foreign exchange rate increases and the value of the rial decreases. In view of the volume of Iran's borrowing and the annual payments of about \$6 billion for interest, less revenue is coming into the country. To compensate for this decrease, imports must be reduced significantly. On this basis, one can conclude that under such circumstances the Central Bank has had no choice but to operate in crisis mode, but international conditions warn that even if inflation can be anchored in Iran, the possibility of the rial weakening in the future still exists.

[PAYAM-E EMRUZ] Is there any outlook for a reduction in the foreign exchange rate?

[Pesaran] In the long term there will be a reduction in the value of the rial, especially if policy is aimed at economic growth. As was mentioned, however, if the reduction in the growth of production laid out in the Five-Year Plan does not cause political and social problems, the foreign exchange policy can be continued for no more than one more year.

Development Plans

[PAYAM-E EMRUZ] Then development programs must be revised?

[Pesaran] Yes. Unless oil revenues suddenly increase, Iran's international problems are solved, conditions for repaying foreign loans change and we get loans on better terms, the efficiency of the factories that export their products greatly improves and we get control of the markets in the Central Asian and Persian Gulf nations, there is no other solution. We thus see that there are many factors in setting the foreign exchange rate; the government's policies are only a part of these factors. They do not play the deciding role.

In this regard another important point must also be kept in mind. Today, per-capita oil revenues (with base prices taken from the year 1357 [21 March 1978])

20 March 1979)) are one-fourth of what they were before the revolution (of course this does not mean that this revenue reduction was caused by the war or the revolution. No. Even if there had been no revolution, there would have been a significant reduction in per-capita oil revenues). In such circumstances, without basic and comprehensive economic reforms, there is no choice but to reduce the general standard of living. This reality has not been accepted, however. The idea still prevails among us that we must keep our face red from being slapped constantly. There is no agreement among the political and social groups as to who should reduce his consumption, and no group is willing to work cooperatively to lower its standard of living. In the last three or four years the incomes of some social groups have increased under the influence of the policies of adjustment. The reduction in per-capita income which has occurred in establishing the system of adjustment has not been justly and equally divided among the social groups. This has had important social consequences. In my view it is one of the important issues that must be given attention.

After the revolution, despite the drop in per-capita production (Figure 1) [Figure 1 omitted: "Real Per-Capita Consumption and Investment Expenses (Iran's Economy, 1338 - 1372)" (21 March 1959 - 20 March 1974)] and the decrease in per-capita investment (Figure 2), [Figure 2 omitted: "Share of Real Per-Capita Consumption in Gross Domestic Revenues (1985—percent)"] per-capita consumption has not decreased that much, nor has this small decrease been divided appropriately among all the classes. The question is, how can the power to produce be increased despite the acute social problem and the lack of investment resources? Figure 3 [Figure 3 omitted: "Share of Real Consumption in Gross Domestic Revenues (1985—percent)"] shows the ratio of consumption to total production in Iran compared to other countries. As you see, the ratio of consumption compared to total production in Iran was declining until 1357 [21 March 1978 - 20 March 1979], while investment was increasing. After that the ratio of consumption to production increased.

The economic changes of the last five years caused consumption to decrease a little again compared to total production, but this did not continue. Japan, Korea and Singapore succeeded in the economic domain when they were able to reduce their ratio of consumption to total production over a relatively long period of time.

Negative Profits at Banks

[PAYAM-E EMRUZ] How can unbridled consumption be reduced when we see that some groups are interested in more consumption?

[Pesaran] One of the factors that make it difficult to control consumption is the negative profit rate the banks really pay to depositors. It is natural that while inflation is 35 percent and bank profits are 18 percent (and that is for long-term deposits), the people prefer to buy durable goods and equipment, and consequently consumption increases. The negative profit rates at the banks is also one of the important reasons for creating and developing the markets for land, housing and automobile speculation. At the same time, if bank profits were in conformity with inflation, the rush to get loans would subside. One of the reasons for bank embezzlement, of which there is much talk these days, is this same low profit rate at the banks. If the profit rate were realistic, then embezzlement would not be that attractive.

[PAYAM-E EMRUZ] What do you recommend for improving the situation?

[Pesaran] The solution is not just economic. It has social and political aspects as well. All economies suffer from inflation and will continue to do so when the banks pay negative profits to depositors, because the people prefer to get loans and consume to saving and investing. When limited financial resources are not put in the service of production and there is a high tendency to consume in an economy, then one must inevitably resort to imports, and this in itself exacerbates inflation. Thus the banking system must be reformed.

The clearness of policies is also a very important subject. Some say that if merchants and producers were aware of policies, since they are very clever, they would change and thwart the policies. Yet it is not always like this. If the government's policies are not clear, private sector will not consider the future and will not be interested in investment in production.

A third point is the constant changes in foreign exchange, financial and credit regulations. These changes undermine confidence among investors in the future of what they do. Careful attention to the issue of the work force and labor, tax and ownership laws also determines the degree of success of an economic system. One must deal with investment which derives high profits through the tax system, but not through confiscation and arrests. Because of the crippling regulations, the investor will not want to be active in the domain of production. When the number of investors in production is reduced, the ones who will succeed in this area will be those who have connections and exceptional situations, and it is natural that a special group will make enormous profits. The first principle is fighting against selling at high prices, controlling currency in circulation in the economy and waging a basic struggle against monopolies.

In my view the constant and unanticipated changes in economic policy are mostly due to the fact that the policies were prepared without sufficient study and care. After a period of time a crisis emerges, and to get through the crisis officials must announce new policies. I do not think the chief of the Central Bank or the other officials are unaware of the consequences of these changes in policies. The reality is that in the circumstances that have developed, they are forced to do these things. Something must be done so that this element of compulsion in preparing economic policy will disappear, or at least become less important.

Nepal

King Appoints New Ministers to Cabinet Positions

BK1512164695 Kathmandu THE KATHMANDU
POST in English 14 Dec 95

[Report by staff reporter — received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kathmandu, Dec 13 - His Majesty the King has in accordance with the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990 and on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, appointed additional ministers, one minister of state and assistant ministers to the council of ministers constituted on Sept 12 under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and expanded on Sept 22.

His Majesty has also allocated portfolios to the new ministers, one minister of state, and assistant ministers as follows retaining Royal Palace affairs and defence in the Prime Ministers portfolio.

Ministers	Portfolio
Lila Koirala	Women and Social Welfare
Bal Bahadur KC	Youth, Sports and Culture
Bimalendra Nidhi	General Administration
Prakash Man Singh	Population and Environment
Nars Hari Acharya	Parliamentary Affairs
State Minister	
Sarad Singh Bhandari	Without Portfolio
Assistant Ministers	
Chin Kaji Shrestha	Finance
Gopalji Jung Shah	Industry
Hasta Bahadur Malla	Education
Dipak Ranabhadra	Home
Ganesh Bahadur Khadka	Works and Transport

Ministers	Portfolio
Chhabi Prasad Devkota	Population and Environment
Duryodhan Choudhari	Women and Social Welfare
Ram Chandra Kusabaha	Information and Communications
Suresh Chandra Das Yadav	Health
Min Bahadur Khatri	Forest and Soil Conservation
Palten Gurung	Youth Sports and Culture
Jyotendra Mohan Choudhary	Labour

Three Killed on Border by 'Indian Militant Gang'

BK2012044795 Kathmandu THE KATHMANDU
POST in English 19 Dec 95

[Report by Shankar Kharal — received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Biratnagar, Dec 18 — Three people were killed when a hardcore Indian militant gang Sunday morning opened bullet fires indiscriminately at Jogbani of Nepal-India border in eastern Nepal.

The deceased, identified as Indian nationals, were temporarily residing in Biratnagar, locals say. Among the deceased, two of them died on the spot while the third breathed his last enroute to the hospital.

While the first two names of those killed were identified as Sudhir Kumar Varma and Shyamlal Bhujawala, the third, who was sitting on a motor cycle, is yet to be identified.

The incident took place at a time when the miscreant, well- equipped with weapons, came in a Maruti van in search of a notorious smuggler named Bhagwan Yadav. But since Yadav had already disappeared just ten minutes prior to their arrival on the spot, the criminals blatantly opened fire with AK-47 rifle, eyewitnesses say.

Among those killed, two were very closely associated with Bhagwan Yadav, it is learnt.

Sundays incident has greatly affected normal life in Jogbani. It has virtually sealed off the border region in a colossal loss of revenue in Biratnagar customs office.

Police force from both the countries, in a bid to restore normalcy, have intensified surveillance in the region.

It is to be recalled that three such incidents have already taken place in the eastern border region of Jogbani just within a year.

Pakistan

Ali Discusses Kashmir, Indian Nuclear Test

3K1912141095 Islamabad PTV Television Network
in English 1300 GMT 19 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] At the foreign ministers' conference in New Delhi, Pakistan has reiterated that there shall be no positive prospects of any talks between India and Pakistan if the core issue of Kashmir is not on the agenda, reports Ghulam Nabi Khayal, our special correspondent, from New Delhi.

[Begin Khayal recording] Pakistan has reiterated that there shall be no positive prospects of any parleys between India and Pakistan without these talks being structured and the core issue of Kashmir put on the top of agenda. The Pakistani foreign minister, Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali, said here in New Delhi today that India was bound to resolve the Kashmir problem and that it was an international dispute.

Speaking to the PTV News, Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali expressed his great satisfaction over the stand taken by the foreign ministers meet of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in Guinea where a resolution supporting the right of self-determination for the people of Kashmir was passed unanimously.

In reply to a question about further extension of India's direct rule over Kashmir, the Pakistani foreign minister said that this step belied the Indian claims to democracy and secularism; [it] is the denial of rights to the people in general, he added.

Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali, who is here in New Delhi attending the 10th conference of the SAARC [South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation] foreign ministers, also warned that in case of India going for a nuclear test, an unfortunate situation shall be created in this region. Ghulam Nabi Khayal for PTV News, New Delhi, India. [end recording]

Meanwhile, in occupied Kashmir itself, Indian troops suffered heavy casualties in clashes and attacks by mujahedin at various places. Three Indian soldiers were killed in a hand grenade attack by mujahedin at Gulshan Nagar. Two more soldiers were killed when a military vehicle was blasted in a land mine explosion in Srinagar. Reports from Baramulla said mujahedin ambushed a military convoy in rural areas of the district killing and injuring a number of soldiers. One mujahed was martyred in the action. A fierce encounter took place during crackdown in Kulgam area which continued for three hours. A number of troops were killed and injured and three mujahedin were martyred.

India's Response to Nuclear Test Concern Viewed

BK2012013095 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network
in English 1600 GMT 19 Dec 95

[Commentary by Mohammad Yamin]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Once THE NEW YORK TIMES recent report about the spy satellites having observed preparations for a nuclear test at India's nuclear site at Pokhran at the Indian desert of Rajasthan continues to attract world attention and causing a universal feeling of serious concern, India's own response to the report remains vague and highly inadequate. The only reaction that the Indian Government has come out with is to dismiss the report as highly speculative. This could really mean anything. If it is meant to be a denial, one wonders why India should fight shy of saying so in a plain straightforward manner.

The United States as the sole superpower on whose policy agenda nuclear nonproliferation occupies a very high position, has, of course, described the Indian move as a serious setback to the global nuclear nonproliferation efforts and contradictory to India's own declared commitment to universal ban on nuclear weapons. The United States feels that the nuclear test by India was a bad idea and would place Pakistan under severe pressure to follow suit as the country already felt its security was threatened by India. Pakistan on its own part has stressed that it India did go for its second nuclear test, Islamabad would have to consider taking appropriate measures.

India carried out first nuclear blast in 1974. Great Britain has also taken note of the development. A spokesman of the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office revealed the other day that Britain is in contact with Indian Government over its reported preparations for a nuclear explosion. Britain was seeking clarification of the Indian Government over its contemplated move and would formulate its reaction once the requisite information was provided by India.

As in many other matters — both international and domestic — India's stance on nuclear issue is characterized by stubbornness and utter disregard of world opinion. In fact, the leading opposition party of India, the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP], has urged the Indian Government to articulate a nuclear policy and not to bow to the United States pressure. Stretching the argument to a preposterous limit, BJP parliamentary [party] leader has observed that NEW YORK TIMES report that India was planning a nuclear test was a deliberate plan by the United States State Department and was designed to divert attention from U.S. arms supplies to Pakistan. He also felt that the United States intended to pressurize

India, particularly in the light of the ongoing conference on disarmament and negotiations on a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. He asked the Indian Government to adopt a unanimous parliamentary resolution on India's nuclear policy implying that India should build up a formidable nuclear arsenal. Such saber rattling on the part of the leader of one of India's strongest political parties could only provide strength and support for the Indian government's nuclear designs about which the satellite information has provided relevant evidence.

Indian nuclear policy is just in reverse gear while the world moves toward ban on nuclear weapons. The ASEAN has already declared Southeast Asia a nuclear-free zone. Pakistan pleads for a nuclear-free South Asia and its proposals on the issue have been adopted by UN General Assembly. India should not ignore world mood and rather desist from taking a dangerous path.

Iran Offer of Money for Nuclear Technology Rejected

*BK2012103095 Karachi DAWN in English
20 Dec 95 p 1*

[Report by Istashamul Haque]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Islamabad, Dec 19 — Pakistan has declined Iran's offer to finance its next year's budgetary requirements of 3.5 billion dollars in return for nuclear technology to Tehran.

While regretting the offer Pakistan said that whatever little capability it has, that it was for peaceful purposes and could not be transferred to any third country, a diplomatic source told Dawn on Tuesday.

The US government also shared Islamabad's perception and finally certified that Pakistan was not offering any nuclear technology to Iran, he said.

Iran had offered 3.5 billion dollars to Nawaz Sharif government in December, 1992 for sharing its nuclear know-how. The offer is still very much valid till recently but Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto eventually expressed her government's inability to do so when Iran raised the issue during her recent visit to Iran.

Pakistan's decision not to transfer its nuclear technology to any third country had also helped Senator Hank Brown in getting one time waiver of the Pressler Amendment thus restoring limited military sales to Pakistan.

The Assistant Secretary of State Robin Raphel also testified that Pakistan had refused the Iranian offer.

Nawaz Proposes Conditions for 'Meaningful Dialogue'

*BK1712081695 Islamabad THE NATION in English
16 Dec 95 pp 1, 13*

[Report by Khalid Qayum: "Nawaz's Conditions for Talks With Government," including "text of Nawaz Sharif's letter to Benazir"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Islamabad — Responding to prime minister's meeting offer, Opposition Leader Nawaz Sharif has conditioned "meaningful dialogue" with fresh elections coupled with basic constitutional and legal reforms.

"If you agree with this proposal in principle, then we can initiate meaningful dialogue through an appropriate parliamentary committee to prepare a package of constitutional reforms and mid-term elections" said Nawaz Sharif in his much-awaited reply.

Released on Thursday night the reply apparently rejected Benazir Bhutto's offer to the president of Pakistan Muslim League (N) to sit together and hammer out constitutional amendments to restore women's seats and repeal the 8th Amendment.

Prime Minister Benazir had addressed a letter to Nawaz Sharif last Sunday offering a meeting.

The offer was rejected to the extent that "constitutional reforms should not be confined to two points mentioned in your letter." While giving first priority to demand of holding fresh elections Nawaz Sharif pointed out that this should be preceded by constitutional reforms that "should cover other important issues such as constitutional restrictions on floor crossing, independence of judiciary, setting up an independent and high powered judicial commission for eradicating corruption and constitutional guarantees for free and fair elections."

Nawaz's reply was based on political moves of the past as back as July 1993 when he (Nawaz) was the prime minister and Benazir leader of the Opposition. Quoting a part from Benazir's letter of July 9, 1993, wherein Benazir as opposition leader had rejected Nawaz Sharif's offer as prime minister of a meeting on grounds that democratic atmosphere was not conducive for a meaningful meeting, Nawaz Sharif said that present political and economic atmosphere was much worse than what it was in July 1993 and level of political victimization unprecedented.

He further stated that the issue of women's seats and 8th Amendment, though important, took secondary priority to burning issues like economic paralysis, turmoil in Karachi, absence of rule of law, rampant corruption and plight of common man. He maintained country could not

get out from the mess without going to the electorates for fresh elections.

Following is the text of Nawaz Sharif's letter to Benazir:

Dear Prime Minister,

1. I am in receipt of your letter dated 10 December, 1995 regarding certain Constitutional amendments to restore the women's seats and to repeal the 8th Amendment.

2. While appreciating your anxiety to restore the faltering credibility of the government in the face of a growing political and economic crisis in the country, I am sure you would also recall your own words as leader of the Opposition when in response to my invitation for a meeting, you said in your letter dated 9 July 1993: "a one to one meeting is not possible until your government takes the necessary steps to create a democratic atmosphere by ending political and economic victimisation of the Opposition.... Such a meeting would become meaningful only in the event of the regime taking tangible and concrete steps for a political settlement. There is no such mention in your letter nor an acceptance of the three point formula presented by me." (national government, constitutional reform package and fresh elections).

3. I hope you will agree with me that the present political and economic atmosphere is much worse than it was in July 1993 and the level of political victimisation is unprecedented. Such a tense situation is hardly conducive for a meaningful dialogue nor can it prepare the ground for a political settlement.

4. I hope you will also agree with me that these two issues namely the women's seats and the 8th Amendments, though important, take second priority to the burning issues facing the nation today; namely the economic paralysis, the turmoil in Karachi, the total absence of rule of law in the country, rampant corruption and the desperate plight of the common man.

5. It is my considered opinion that the country cannot get out of the serious economic mess, the grave political crisis and the alarming Karachi situation without going back to the electorate through fresh elections coupled with basic constitutional and legal reforms. I am sure this is not too high a price to rid the country of this malaise and put Pakistan back on the rails.

6. If you agree with this proposal in principle, then we can initiate meaningful negotiations through an appropriate Parliamentary Committee to prepare a package of constitutional reforms and mid-term elections. The constitutional reforms should not be confined to the two points mentioned in your letter but should also cover other important issues such as constitutional restrictions

on floor crossing, independence of judiciary, setting up an independent and high powered judicial commission for eradicating corruption and constitutional guarantees for free and fair elections.

7. I am surprised that despite such massive failures on every front, the government should still insist on completing its 5 years tenure. The country in my view will simply not be able to bear a continuation of this misrule much longer.

[Signed] With regards,
Your Sincerely,
Mohammad Nawaz Sharif

Police Arrest Indian 'Agent' in Peshawar

BK2012091895 Islamabad THE MUSLIM in English
20 Dec 95 p 12

[Report by THE MUSLIM Peshawar bureau]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The CID [Criminal Investigation Department] police Peshawar Tuesday apprehended a goods merchant, Ghani Mohammad, who confessed to be a RAW [Research and Analysis Wing] agent, and recovered two bombs of eight kilogram each from his possession.

Ghani Mohammad, who was caught from Ashraf Road Peshawar city during a raid by the CID police reportedly admitted during the preliminary interrogation that he was an agent of RAW (Indian secret agency) and previously used to work for KHAD (Afghan secret agency.) He admitted that he was responsible for a number of bombs blasts in Peshawar. He also hinted the presence of a number of other agents in the city.

Sri Lanka

President Lifts Censorship on Military News

BK2012011895 Colombo DAILY NEWS in English
20 Dec 95

[Received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Sri Lankan government on Tuesday [19 December] announced the lifting from midnight today of the censorship on military news it imposed on the local media three months ago.

A statement signed by the President's secretary K. Balapatabendi said the President expected the media to conduct itself with a sense of responsibility and with due restraint in regard to measures taken to bring about peace and ensure national security.

The presidential secretariat said the censorship was clamped to meet the situation certain newspapers and

media personnel had created with a campaign of falsehoods and disinformation calculated to sabotage the peace process the government set in motion through political discussions and the military measures it was constrained to take later in view of the behaviour of the LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam].

"It was pointed out repeatedly to these newspapers and the media personnel that their campaign was detrimental to the interests of the country and as such they were requested to desist from carrying on this campaign. As they paid no heed at all to this request, the government was compelled to impose a media censorship".

The media censorship was imposed on the local and foreign media on September 21 but the foreign media was exempted four days later.

The government, in its statement, has expressed its gratitude to all media organisations and media personnel who honestly discharged their duty by the nation at this crucial time, realising the gravity of the problem before the government and the whole nation and thus extended their co-operation in the efforts made to resolve it.

The statement said the government had always maintained that the censorship was a temporary measure and would be lifted at the earliest opportunity. The government had stood by its word.

During the period of censorship, the statement said, media organisations and media personnel had asked the government to take them into confidence and treat them as organisations and persons capable of conducting themselves responsibly.

"The President expects that after the revocation of media censorship they will conduct themselves with a sense of responsibility and with due restraint in regard to measures taken to bring about peace and ensure national security", the statement said.

Editorial Considers Issue of Press Freedom

*BK1612085595 Colombo DAILY NEWS in English
15 Dec 95*

[Editorial: "Press Freedom" — received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The frequency with which Media Minister Dharmasiri Senanayake keeps assuring the country of the PA (People's Alliance) government's commitment to a free press it looks as if this government is guilty of dropping journalists into the sea from helicopters or staging road accidents and bumping off press photographers or even telling the government owned press on which page and in what position a news item or a photograph should appear.

These are all events from the dark days of the past. The PA government is committed only to seeing that these things will never happen again. It is a pity that the press has not been sufficiently appreciative of what the PA has been doing from the day it assumed office. Like the Andana Thomma in the Sinhala proverb it has been only waiting to cry each time a finger brushed against the eye.

The press should take a lesson from the freedom that the electronic media in this country is enjoying. Except for few instances when they have reflected their owners' views or lost their balance in the excitement of events and sounded more alarmist than cautious, the electronic media has elevated the level of political debate in this country sometimes even beyond the achievement of the press.

There are several features that are preventing the press from playing a constructive role at this moment in the history of this country. The first is the sense of irresponsibility that rides the newspapers like a demon. Some of the Sunday papers, for instance, are consumed by only one ambition — gossip. This only caters to the lowest taste in the reading public and if we go on like that we shall soon reach anarchic proportions leaving the public interest in great peril, because the press is often guided by private not public interest.

The press commissions held in the past deplored this feature in newspapers of concentrating too much on trivialities and ignoring public interest that works towards the common good. Newspapers that style themselves the national press should not be guilty of this offence. There is always a place for the kavi kola karaya [meaning unknown] in any society and even Britain has its own form, The Private Eye, but people do know how to take in such news and with how many pinches of salt.

The irresponsibility of the press may be reduced to some extent by what the Media Minister is proposing to do. He is planning to elevate the profession by providing a training institute and by creating a decent salary structure. Some harm has been done to the journalistic profession by bringing it under the Shop and Office Employees Act. While this Act basically ensures the payment of overtime etc. it is a fact that journalists do not work with those considerations in mind when they do get their teeth into a job. Such commitment must be recognised in forming the journalists into a professional body.

The PA government's commitment to a free press is well and good. But this should be freed from the political rhetoric that goes along with it. What we need is the creation of a responsible body of journalists with sufficient breadth of mind and wide interests. Once we succeed in creating this body "freedom of the press" will look after itself.

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